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OPINIONS OF THE PRESS.

"We have here evidently the work of a close and sympathetic observer, who wields a facile pen, and produces a picture of the past and present of the Colony as a whole, such as has never been presented before."

Nassau Guardian.

"It is undoubtedly the best book on the Bahamas."

Bahama News.

"Mr. Northcroft's book may be accepted as at once the most distinctly comprehensive, eloquent, and painstaking contribution to the literature of the Bahamas which has yet appeared. In fact Mr. Northcroft has made himself indispensable to whoever would know the colony."

Work and Workers.

"It is a pleasant, well written book, full of charm and information. The author makes us long to visit his sunny shores."

Methodist Magazine.

Sketches of Summerland.

GIVING SOME ACCOUNT OF NASSAU

AND

THE BAHAMA ISLANDS;

BY

279
G. J. H. NORTHCROFT

Author of "Sonnets of the Bahamas," etc.

—* : *—

"A small sweet world of wave-encompassed wonder."

Swinburne.

—* : *—

N A S S A U :

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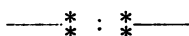
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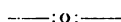
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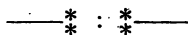
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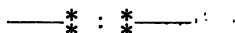
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P R E F A C E.



This little volume is simply what its title indicates—a series of sketches. Nothing so exact as a photograph, so brilliant as a study in oils, so delicate as a water-colour, or so fine as an etching, has been attempted. But in simple black and white I have recorded the impressions of some years' life in the Bahamas.

I have not been able to make my work exhaustive or entirely scientific—which qualities, indeed, can hardly be expected in sketches. But with such sympathy and insight as may be at my command I have tried to combine an honest measure of accuracy.

I am debtor to more friends than I can mention for suggestions, for the loan of books, and for information on various subjects; and I would beg them all to read, in this brief word, the heartiest expression of my thanks. I should especially mention the use I have made of the excellent Bibliography of the Bahamas appended to the Rev. G. Lester's interesting book *In Sunny Isles*; all future writers on this subject will find themselves, I imagine, under a similar obligation to his careful research.

I hope my fellow colonists will discover in these pages no hint of unkindly caricature, but a fair attempt to present the Bahamas of to-day

P R E F A C E.

in a picturesque and interesting form. And for the rest—though many volumes may already have been written, each new beholder is to himself another Cortez.

G. J. H. NORTHCROFT.

ABACO,

AUGUST, 1899.

}

PREFACE TO THE SECOND EDITION.

—:o:—

The correction of typographical errors, the bringing up to date matters of fact and statements involving statistics, and a few modifications of personal opinion, with the addition of an Index, form the principal alterations in the present edition.

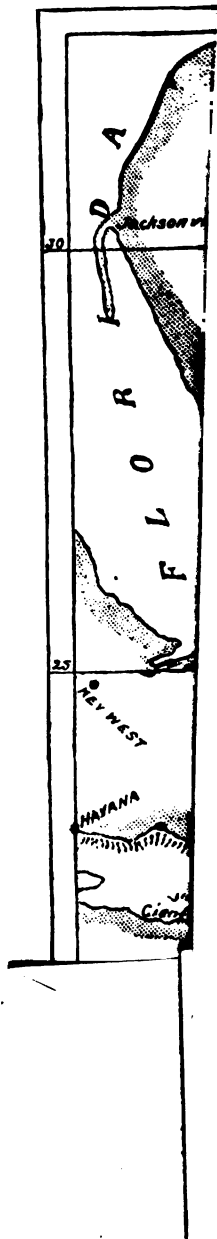
It is gratifying to know that these *Sketches of Summerland* are recognised as having supplied the large and growing demand for a modern and reliable book on the Bahamas. The reception of the volume in England and America, alike amongst strangers and those who know the colony, has been satisfactory both to the author and publishers—to the latter especially so, as this is the first book ever printed by a Bahamian firm.

G. J. H. NORTHCROFT.

ABACO,

DECEMBER, 1901.

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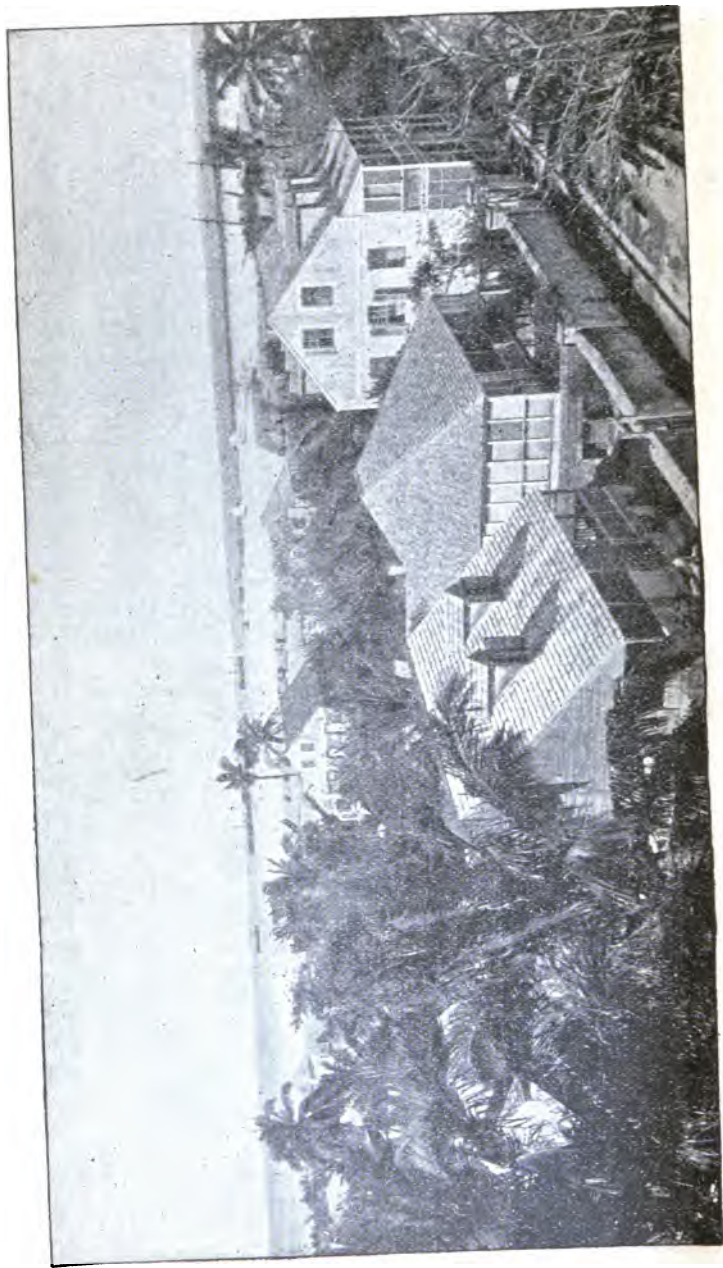
THE BAHAMAS OF TO-DAY.

—* : *—

An archipelago of sunlit isles

Set in a trackless waste of shining sea.

Bahamian Ballads and Rhymes.



VIEW OF NASSAU FROM WEST HILL STREET.

CHAPTER I.

FIRST IMPRESSIONS.

SKIES of sapphire flecked with snow,
Saffron strands where mermaids go,
Emerald waves that lap the shore,
Winds that whisper evermore,
Fronched palms that toss and sigh
'Neath the splendour of the sky—
Scenes of Summerland are these,
Of the blest Hesperides.

Songs of Summerland.

BY whatever route one travels in the winter from the north to Nassau—whether *via* the Florida East Coast Railway to Miami and thence by steamer across the Gulf, or direct from New York on one of the Ward Line steamers—the change of scene and atmosphere is little short of marvellous. In the former case, being more gradual, it is less striking, but in the latter the transformation seems wrought by the wave of an enchanter's wand! One determines to fly from the fearful northern winter. One embarks some Thursday afternoon in a blinding snow-storm on a steamer lying in the icy waters of the East River, and after a voyage of varying felicity the lighthouses of Abaco are seen on Sunday evening. With the dawn the saffron beaches of

2 SKETCHES OF SUMMERLAND.

Hog Island and the white wharves of Nassau lie on the starboard quarter and the ship drops anchor off the harbour bar. Or, after a night's sail on the steamship from Florida, the dawn reveals the same picture as, in this case, the vessel steams slowly up the harbour, past crowds of sponging boats and larger craft, to the principal wharf of the city opposite The Park.

A diminutive but useful lighthouse stands sentinel upon the western point of the long narrow islet which helps to form the harbour. An ancient fortress, away on the right, rises peacefully unpretentious above the Golf Links and the Cricket Ground; from the staff on its summit sundry flags are floating gaily in the morning breeze, and the smiling sea-front of the capital of Summerland gradually discloses itself to the visitor's interested eye. The background of the picture is formed by the ridge running east and west, parallel with the shore, on which stand many buildings of comfortable proportions and pleasing appearance, conspicuous among them being Government House and the Royal Victoria Hotel. From the former is flying the British ensign and from the latter the Stars and Stripes—typical of a cousinly cordiality that is deeper than diplomacy and more enduring than alliances. Mr. Flagler's huge new hotel fronts the entrance to the harbour, overwhelming all the little buildings round it, its dimensions prophetic of the unlimited comforts and delights which await the expectant visitor.

If this happens to be the tourist's first visit so far south he will be interested to note certain tropical touches in the scene before him.

Cocoa-nut palms, standing alone and stately or gathered together in groves, stretch their long necks up to the cloudless sky and wave their fronds in the gentle breeze ; other curious trees and many bright flowers delight the eye even from a distance ; while the crowds of lightly-clad and careless coloured-folk, the wide piazzed houses, and the absence of all northern noises, born of factories and railway-trains and street-cars, combine to complete the charm of climate and surroundings. Over all the soft winds of Summerland blow with a bracing fragrance and the bright sunshine falls, smokeless, clear, unhindered by huge buildings, upon earth and sea, and the most persistent "planet pilgrim" who knows many lands and has gazed on many scenes of natural beauty—feels that this is surely the lotos-land of all his fairest dreams.

But the object of chief wonder is the water. All around and beneath the vessel lies the matchless beauty of the sub-tropical sea. Outside the harbour the ship gently rolls upon a mirror of undulating indigo, deep, mysterious, majestic ; with an almost imperceptible transition the indigo passes into ultramarine as the sea grows shallower within the bar ; then follow, up to the edges of the wharves and the silver beaches, stretches of glittering emerald, intense and deep or bright and clear—like a green silken veil thrown over an ivory statue ; patches of purple here and there show unsuspected depths and intervals of amethyst hue indicate some change in the tint and structure of the sub-marine floor. It is, indeed, a sight unique—"a thing of beauty" and "a joy for ever," a cause of

4 SKETCHES OF SUMMERLAND.

ceaseless wonder and delight to those who, hitherto, have only known the ocean under its more sombre aspects.

All attempts to describe the beauty of the sea about the Bahamas, either by pen or picture, are unsatisfactory at best. Mr. Bierstadt, the distinguished American artist, has been remarkably successful in his picturesque attempt entitled "Azure Sea," and other painters of lesser note have emulated his efforts. But Mr. Bierstadt's picture has been scouted as a splendid exaggeration. Incredulous groups might have been seen before it as it hung in the Bahamas Court at the Indian and Colonial Exhibition (London) of 1886. In fact, those who have not been to the Bahamas, and hear or read some attempt to describe the waters of these parts, find it difficult to accept such representations as accurate ; yet, after all, they are only approximations towards exactness. Everyone who has written about this colony, even in letters to friends, has tried—I suppose—to tell how beautiful the water is, and has certainly pondered long, vainly shuffling and discarding inadequate adjectives, seeking to portray, in words of varied hue, the magic beauty and the changeful wonder of the Carib sea. The painter, of course, comes nearest to nature, but even he—however skilful a colourist, however, sure his insight, and however deft his brush—cannot reproduce the flash and shimmer of the sunlight on the swift waves, the toss of the silver crests on the breaking sea, or the long drowsy wash of the tide up the saffron beaches, whose music

"Gentlier on the spirit lies
Than tired eyelids upon tired eyes."

There is another route to Nassau which I have not yet mentioned—it is *via* Cuba. One may embark at Tampa or Key West for Havana, and, after wandering through the island to the heart's content, find one's way to Cienfuegos, the southern terminus of the Ward Line steamers, whence vessels sail fortnightly for Nassau. The interesting sight of Cuba in transition will then be seen, but it will take some of the charm from the first sight of the Bahamas. It may be compared to entering a house through the back door. It is true that many of the windward islands of the group will be passed *en route*, but their special beauty will be lessened by contrasts with the higher land and greater fertility of the Pearl of the Antilles. From the point of view of the Bahamian, jealous for the admiration of his island home, this mode of reaching Nassau is not to be recommended; and for all who annually flee from the rigours of the northern winter it is better to begin with the Bahamas, and then, if so desired, go on to Cuba. In this way the transition to the tropics is more gradual and the experiences attendant on it are cumulative, reaching their climax in many scenes essentially Cuban and entirely tropical.

Still, however reached, Nassau, the sunny metropolis of Summerland, stands unique among West Indian cities. There is no grandeur in its first appearance, but everything about it is bright and picturesque and eminently pleasing. Rising from the matchless beauty of the emerald sea that laps its spreading beaches and laves its coral wharves it appears in its true character as the ideal city of refuge from the labours and

6 SKETCHES OF SUMMERLAND.

anxieties, the snows and frosts and dull days of the north.

Approaching the wharf on the steam-tender or on the vessel that has brought him over the Gulf from Florida the visitor sees an eager and variously-tinted crowd awaiting his arrival. Scantily-clothed, chocolate-coloured urchins exhort him to cast his coin upon the waters, from whose emerald depths they will deftly rescue it after a quick plunge and a competing scramble. The pranks and cries of these marine acrobats give great amusement as the tug draws near the wharf, and afford an introduction to one of the many curious ways by which Bahamians snatch a living from the ocean. As the vessel is being made fast you look more closely at the groups on shore. Some are here expecting friends, many awaiting mails ; it is even possible that business brings a few men to the wharf ; but most gaze idly at the disembarking passengers, seeking an appetite and a topic of conversation for the breakfast table.

Inevitably one contrasts this scene with the circumstances attending one's departure from the wintry North, and these lines unconsciously float through the mind :

“ Do I sleep, do I dream,
Do I wonder and doubt ?
Are things what they seem
Or are visions about ?
Is this really a day in mid-winter
Or has the cold weather cleared out ? ”

With apologies for parodying Bret-Harte's famous verse, I submit that it helps, at least, to represent the thoughts that probably possess the

tourist's mind as he looks with new interest around, doffs his few remaining wraps, and prepares to land on this enchanted shore. The expression is all too inadequate I admit ; one's feelings can better be imagined than described ; but some such form of wonder and delight they took in the minds of us old colonials as we entered, years ago, this sunny land that has made us lazy and quietly accustomed to sights so quaint and scenes so beautiful.

How suggestive the white dresses of the ladies look, how cool the men's light suits, the straw hats and the sun helmets. Numbers of brawny, bare-foot negroes—men, women, and children—stand out against the green background of trees and shrubs dotted with gorgeous blossoms, completing the impressions of southern leisure and tropic sunshine which the scene stamps upon the mind. A few officials, here and there, give character to the crowd ; the Customs Inspector—genial, ubiquitous, and just—and the coloured Policemen, in uniforms of blue serge with white helmets—military-looking for all their bland officiousness. As soon as the visitor is free from the scrutiny of the revenue officers and passes out into the Park, he becomes the prey of hack-drivers and juvenile porters galore, all eager to convey him and his belongings to the hotel. Having bestowed his patronage he walks or is driven to his temporary home, over wide hard roads that glisten white in the morning sun, between avenues of almond trees that border the well-kept streets. And here let us leave him to his breakfast.

CHAPTER II.

HOTELS AND BOARDING HOUSES.

Here let us stay ;
No farther will we roam ;
For night and day
In this warm Southern home
Is bright and gay—
Forget the frost and foam !

Songs of Summerland.

THIS chapter is an interlude, but is—I think—obviously in order here. It occurs as an interruption to the story of a visitor's first impressions, for the purpose of assuring him that his creature comforts will not be neglected during his stay in this city of sunshine. He will not be required to sleep beneath the open sky, however winsome its beauties, nor to feed upon the bracing air and brilliant sunlight however healthful. His many needs shall all be adequately met, as this chapter will show and personal experience confirm.

Nassau is fortunate in having two historical hotels. The older one, the *Royal Victoria*, was built by the Bahamas Government at a cost of twenty-five thousand pounds, commenced in 1859 and opened in 1861. It is a handsome and

commodious structure standing ninety feet above sea level on the ridge that runs east and west parallel with the shore and at a short distance from it inland. It has a frontage of two hundred feet, is four stories high, and has three wide piazzas on the north and south and running round the circular eastern end. The semi-detached western portion of the hotel was formerly used for educational purposes as King's College School, affiliated to King's College, London, but it has formed, for some years now, a convenient and more private portion of the main building.

In front and on either side of the hotel lie spacious grounds, planted with trees and flowering shrubs, affording the guests a pleasant and much-frequented promenade. They are entered on three sides, from East Street, Shirley Street and Parliament Street. An annex to the hotel, formerly the *Curry House*, or the *The Carthagena* of still later fame, stands near the Shirley Street entrance, and the combined Hair-dressing Saloon, Billiard Room, and Bar lies to the left of the Parliament Street entrance. The building is crowned by an octagonal cupola, glazed all round and with an interior gallery from which may be seen a charming and extensive view—the white, far-stretching streets of Nassau, its shingled roofs gleaming in the sun; the little hills and larger valleys, the smiling fields and waving pine woods of New Providence; the small surrounding cays, olive-tinted and with silver beaches, emerging from the glittering emerald sea, with the heaving, dark-blue ocean in the distance.

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The interior arrangements of the hotel are admirable. A spacious dining-room lies east of the entrance-hall which, with the porch in front, forms a pleasant lounge in the gracious Bahamian climate. The drawing-room, private parlours, bed-rooms and corridors, have all been constructed with a view to airiness and comfort, and afford accommodation for upwards of two hundred guests. The *Royal Victoria* has for a long period enjoyed the reputation of being one of the best situated and most admirably arranged hotels in the West Indies. It was managed some years ago by Mr. Lewis Cleveland, brother of the Ex-President. This unfortunate gentleman lost his life on a steamer that was burnt off the island of Abaco, in travelling from New York to Nassau. Mr. S. S. Morton of New York was subsequently the lessee for a long time and is remembered as an excellent and genial host by many hundreds of visitors and by most Nassauvians.

But with the year 1898 an entire change was effected not only in the management but also in the proprietorship of the hotel. Previous to that date negotiations had been entered into by the Bahamas Government with Mr. H. M. Flagler, of wide and honourable fame, for the purchase of the building and the provision of a suitable Steam Service in connection with the Florida East Coast Railway. On the expiration of Mr. Morton's lease this transfer was effected and with the Season of 1898 the new *regime* was inaugurated. It need hardly be said that with the great facilities at his command Mr. Flagler's energetic manager, Mr. H. E. Bemis, more than

maintained the ancient prestige of the *Royal Victoria*. Extensive alterations have been made in the grounds, entrance-hall and out-buildings of the hotel ; electric light has been installed throughout, and the whole establishment now fitly takes its place in Mr. Flagler's splendid Hotel System which is famous all over the world.

I have spoken of this as an historical hotel, and this title it certainly merits. It was the scene of many curious and interesting episodes, and the home of large and variously-assorted crowds during the blockade-running years in the early sixties ; it has weathered more than one severe hurricane which would have rased a less substantial building to the ground ; it has had for at least two generations of Bahamians many happy associations as " the hotel," whose genial guests have done so much to make interesting the winter months of this colonial capital, and whose pleasant Saturday-night dances and the annual ball on Washington's Birthday have been red-letter days in the lives of many young people. Formerly the hotel court was the scene of daily bargains between visitors and natives who came to sell rare shells and dainty shell-work, fine sponges, turtle backs, beautiful Spanish-work, and other quaint productions of nature or of native skill ; pleasure-boat captains, hack-drivers, and persons otherwise interested in the opulent tourist arranged with their eager patrons for excursions of various sorts, while coloured urchins danced, sang, or scrambled for coppers with quite a tropical recklessness and warmth. But concerning many of these things the pre-

sent management says "*nous avons changé tout cela*," and as a consequence, the hotel is quieter, though perhaps, more prosaic than formerly. But when once Nassau became joined to the Florida tourist route it was inevitable that this should be so, as the greater traffic incidental to such a change made stricter regulations necessary.

A word should be said concerning the hotel *cuisine*—a matter of some importance to the invalid and of not a little interest to the healthy. Thirty years ago a gentleman writing of Nassau said: "The hotel is admirable, but its culinary resources are very limited. It is on record that a newly arrived visitor, surveying the scantily-supplied breakfast table, detected one egg in the possession of a gentleman who could, of course, scarcely be expected to share it. Calling the waiter, he asked for another egg; but the waiter informed him that the desired article, then rapidly disappearing, had been procured, after much research and at some expense, in the City of Nassau by the gentleman himself, the hotel authorities having only cooked it."* But this is an ancient legend, improbable then, impossible now. For of one thing the visitor may be certain, that his material wants will be amply provided for; his difficulty will be rather to select than obtain. He will not be compelled to eat dishes peculiar to the country, such as might be dreaded by persons with fixed and elevated ideas of gastronomic pleasure. All table necessities, and delicacies galore, are rapidly and frequently

* Bacot's Bahamas, p. 70.

imported from the great northern markets, special facilities for this being afforded by the Government to the hotel authorities. Of native fruits and fish the visitor will probably wish to make a trial. Turtle—for instance—will hardly be objected to by anyone, and turtle of the finest he certainly may have, as well as a host of familiar dishes and such frequent delights and surprises of the culinary art as the experienced *chef* alone can produce. An amusing instance either of similarity of taste, conservative hotel management, or literary plagiarism, is afforded by an account given of a visit to Nassau by a certain gentleman in 1878 who was delighted with his first breakfast “consisting of turtle-steak, chocolate, and tropical fruits freshly plucked.”* No less than three subsequent writers, I find, had these same viands for *their* first breakfast, at intervals of several years—not impossible, of course, but still rather remarkable. The odd thing is that this repast is described in precisely the same words by each of the four travellers. I have no doubt that this historic breakfast—and an excellent one it is—may still be obtained if desired.

Though the older of the two hotels, the *Royal Victoria* is not the most striking. *The Colonial*, Mr. Flagler’s recent creation, awaits, with a huge hospitality, the multitudes of visitors who will doubtless flock to Nassau in the future. Facing the western entrance to the harbour, it is built upon what was known for gener-

* Benjamin’s Atlantic Islands, p. 14.

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ations as the Western Parade, or, more correctly Fleeming Square—so named after an Admiral of the British Navy who was formerly stationed here. I have said that both the Nassau hotels are historical, and it is this that constitutes *The Colonial's* chief claim to that title—it covers historic ground. Where its wide-stretching Plaza and elaborately laid-out grounds slope northward to the sea, Old Fort Nassau used to stand. It was originally erected about 1695 and was the first organized attempt of the early settlers of New Providence to protect themselves from their Spanish neighbours. It was repaired and considerably enlarged in 1742 by a British officer of Engineers, who at the same time built Fort Montague at the eastern entrance to the harbour. Both these forts did good service and saw stirring events in those unsettled days, as will hereafter appear. But not even the remembrance of its strenuous and honourable career could save Fort Nassau from the relentless march of military progress and civil reform. It was allowed gradually to fall into disrepair as the times became more peaceful, and the last trace of it was removed in 1827 when spacious stone Barracks were erected for the accommodation of the garrison which, till 1891, had always been stationed in Nassau. Now, the “discretion” which forestalls disease—being the “better part” of that “valour” which formerly awaited a foe—and the wealth that ministers to modern pleasures, have combined and become iconoclasts; they have rased the barracks to the ground, ordered the Police Force to the rear, silenced the bugle calls and removed the sentries. Hebe is promoted *vice* Mars retired!

The agreement between the Bahamas Government and Mr. Flagler, already referred to, was embodied in an Act of The Legislature, by which that gentleman became owner of the property on which *The Colonial Hotel* now stands, with permission to pull down the Military Barracks and to use the site for his own purposes. New Barracks for the Constabulary were erected at the back of the City near to the prison, and of the military establishment that for many years gave importance to the western end of Nassau, only the block of buildings formerly the Officers Quarters now remains. The once-green parade ground with its border of almond trees, surrounded by glistening streets, now buries in its torn and aching bosom the foundations of the great hotel; and where the tramp of armed men once crushed the dewy grass as the garrison paraded in the early morning the trip of the dancer's feet may now be heard in the big ball-room.

One other historic spot lies within the hotel area. At the north-western corner of the grounds, in what used to be the Ordnance Yard, is "Blackbeard's Well." The famous pirate—so the story goes—used to water his ships here, and presumably, drank of it himself, whenever he used a liquor so innocent as water; and there is a legend to the effect that anyone drinking of this well can never entirely leave the Bahamas, can only, in fact, "say *au revoir* but not good-bye" to these sunny shores. This well should certainly be visited and drunk from.

But it is not alone the site it occupies that gives interest to *The Colonial Hotel*. Its erection

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marks a significant change in the attitude of the Bahamas towards the outside world. It represents, on the part of Nassau, a thorough-going acceptance of its *status* as a modern Winter Sanatorium, and a tacit abandonment of its loftiest hopes of achievement as a commercial centre. Nassau is now committed to the *role* of a health and pleasure resort; only as such is it at all widely known. It desires to be—and is gradually coming to be—regarded as the Hydropathic Establishment of The Hesperides, and of its last ambition *The Colonial Hotel* is the outward and visible sign.

And certainly a substantial sign it is. A huge six-storied structure, in what is known as the "colonial" style of architecture, its great bulk throws even the largest surrounding buildings into insignificance, and its lofty cupola gives a wide and splendid view to seaward. It has accommodation for about five hundred guests within its walls. The length of the main building alone is three hundred and seventy-five feet, and, from this, spacious wings extend to east and west. The rotunda, including the ball-room, measures one hundred and forty feet by fifty. The dining-room, in which nearly six hundred persons can be seated, has a width of sixty feet and is one hundred and sixty two feet long; and the sunny Plaza, stretching along its northern front, has a superficial area of nineteen thousand one hundred and seventy square feet. It is fitted throughout with all modern appliances and improvements, and the furniture both of the public and private apartments is in excellent taste, the dining-room and

ball-room being quite imposing. Altogether it is a fine building, whose erection has been controlled throughout by considerations of luxury and comfort which, indeed, are insured to the visitor by the reputation of its designer and the fame of its management. The rates at both the hotels run from five dollars a day upwards.

To the foregoing remarks on the accommodation and the table arrangements of the Nassau hotels, a reassuring word should be added as to the service. The native waiters and chambermaids, also the porters and hack-drivers, are of a sort quite superior to such persons in the States. It is, very largely, their good fortune to have been, as yet, unspoiled by the evil influences of the coloured life—social and commercial—of the North.

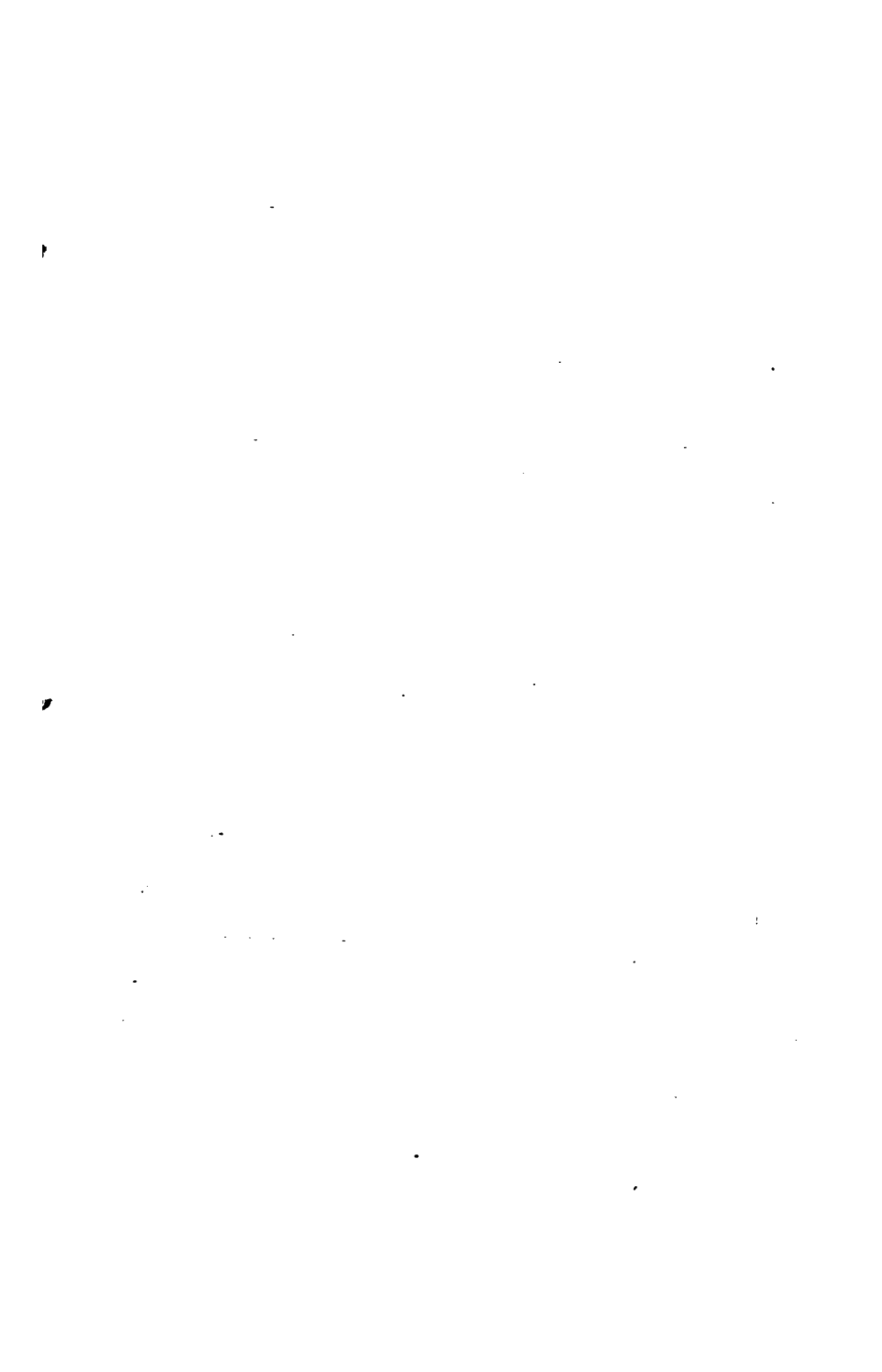
One does not meet here the prototype of Mr. Kipling's coloured waiter, so caustically described in his *American Notes*—at once a Yoruba negro and a man of the world, with language and habits to suit. But many Out-Islanders are here—silent, wondering, swift—a trifle unsophisticated perhaps, in little things, but, for the most part honest, respectful, and obedient to a degree that will probably be found as surprising as it is agreeable. They are not perfect—oh, no !—but an improvement on many specimens of the species “waiter.” Now, if you could only accompany your waiter, unseen, to his out-island home, and hear his description of his season “in town” at the hotel, as he sits in the centre of an admiring crowd and recounts his experiences, you would have the pleasure of a

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novel and interesting experience yourself. But that belongs to another chapter.

There are many boarding-houses in Nassau where greater privacy is offered than can be found at a large hotel, and where the cost of living is considerably less. Their names, situation, and proprietorship so change from year to year that each season merits its own special mentions. Many former visitors have carried away happy memories of the kindness and comfort they have enjoyed in private houses, where they have come to regard themselves almost as one of the family; and in many Nassau homes the names of certain guests have become "familiar in our ears as household words." Of course, friends recommend one another to houses they have found agreeable, and, for the rest, the local press and other means of advertisement, both home and foreign, insure to visitors and proprietors alike meetings of mutual profit and accommodation.

One other way there is of spending a Winter in Nassau. Villas in town or country may be rented, furnished or unfurnished, for long or short periods. But as there are not many of these it is necessary to secure one early in the season.





BAY-STREET.

CHAPTER III.

A CORAL CITY.

Quaint and clean and bright
In the sun's fierce light,
Quiet cool and white
In the silver night.

Bahamian Ballads and Rhymes.

LYING within that belt of Equatorial ocean where alone corals can live and work, Nassau possesses many advantages and distinctions that can be claimed only by a city so situated. They arrest the visitor's attention before he steps ashore, multiply before him as he finds the way to his hotel, and appeal to the unaccustomed eye in his earliest walks. These characteristics must not be considered as belonging merely to the sands and rocks and structure of the island. The phrase admits a much wider interpretation. As its geographical position determines its physical and climatic features, so it affects its character and appearance as a city—its inhabitants and their manner of life.

Nassau generally manages to arouse, if not "love at first sight," at least, a favourable interest in itself. Its appearance is distinctly pre-

possessing. It lies along the northern shore of New Providence, at the foot and on the slope of a low range of hills about ninety feet above sea-level. The roads, so excellent, glistening in the bright winter sun, make walking, driving or cycling a pleasure, and both invite and assist exploring expeditions. With a basis of coral rock, hard and porous, the well-judged arrangement and constant labour of many years has made their white, wide-stretching surfaces quite a feature of the city, and the frequent avenues of trees with which they are bordered increase their picturesqueness. The shops and offices that line the principal street are remarkable for their diversity of design and solid, business-like appearance. Most of them are built of native coral-limestone, cut from the quarries that lie a short distance inland. One who visited Nassau in 1800 thus writes : " It is a town as well built as any I saw in the West Indies, and promises to become distinguished for its beauty. Yet, singular as it may appear, the most durable buildings in Nassau were originally composed of stone imported from the Bermudas, at the distance of more than two hundred leagues." * But even then the workable character and lasting qualities of the native rock were being discovered, and now all the more substantial buildings are composed of it.

Many indications of its sub-tropical climate are seen in the buildings of the Bahamas. Nassau, for instance, is a city without chimneys.

* Edwards' West Indies. Vol. IV. p. 377 ; McKinnen's Appendix on the Bahamas.

This, to a denizen of smoke-haunted streets, is significant enough. Only on the diminutive kitchens, detached from the dwelling-houses. (another characteristic of a community that shuns rather than courts artificial heat) are low chimneys seen, sufficient to carry off the smoke of the wood fires kindled only at intervals and that solely for cooking purposes. Probably not more than two or three fire places of the English sort could be found all over the Colony, and less than half-a-dozen stoves for heating houses. There are occasional winter days, when a "freeze" visits Florida or a keen nor'-wester blows, when such things are desirable; but these days are infrequent and soon pass, and the genial sun resumes his undisputed sway.

Another tribute to his power is the fact that most Nassau houses have at least one piazza—or more accurately, verandah—and sometimes are surrounded by these grateful appendices. All the year round their comfort and convenience are enjoyed; but it is in the still, hot nights of summer—when all who can have departed to cooler regions, and nothing is done that is not absolutely necessary, and after the pitiless sun has been blazing all day above the garish streets and the devoted houses—that the piazza is most used. After seeming to live all day in a poultice it is good to sit in the quiet and comparative coolness. For quite six months of the year the Bahamian piazza is, at different times, the reception room, library or smoking room of the house, and not seldom the *sanctum* of the ladies of the family. The piazzas that abut directly upon the street are still further screened by

painted jalousies which help to keep out the ubiquitous dust, in dry weather, as well as the glare and heat, and most windows are similarly protected. These are some distinguishing marks of this coral city that appeal alike to the eye and imagination of the stranger.

It is noticeable also—and is another sign of Summerland—that the elaborately-dressed shop windows which form so attractive a feature of the business streets in northern cities, are, in Nassau, conspicuous by their absence. Here the shop windows are for use—*i.e.*: light and ventilation—not for ornament or advertisement. And this because the strong sea air and bright sunlight are so destructive of most articles of merchandise. It is necessary to walk inside if you wish to inspect a Nassau tradesman's stock, for very little is to be seen from the street. An interesting sign of our chief source of income is the fact that so many merchants are ship-chandlers. You can, for instance, buy groceries and spars at the same place, or white shirts and anchors; while most merchants can sell you goods salvaged from wrecks, from the ship's bell to the captain's cat. While perhaps it would be going too far to say that in Nassau "everybody sells everything" that statement might certainly be made of most out-island stores. Of shops entirely Bahamian and therefore unique there are a few, where marine curiosities of great beauty and interest may be bought.

But trade in Nassau is by no means confined to the shop-keepers. Sitting in groups or singly on either side of Bay Street, especially in the

region of the Market, are itinerant vendors of fruit, vegetables, cake, nuts, candy, hats or baskets of palmetto leaf—anything, indeed, that native skill or industry can produce and gardens or orchards supply. The stock of these street sellers is carried in baskets on their heads or brought in donkey-carts from the outlying suburbs or by boats from the out-islands. Two dollars would probably buy out the most extensive of these establishments. It is impossible to purchase a quantity of any one thing from one person ; several different vendors would have to be visited for this purpose. Their goods are not weighed or measured, but sold by number or in bulk. Stand by and watch, oh interested one ! Here comes a sponger-boy to this good dame of ample proportions and duchess-like demeanour, whose gay turban surmounts a smiling negro countenance. “ Check ground-nuts ! ” says the boy, and stands munching his purchase and meditating more extravagance. “ How much dese Bananas ? ” he asks. “ Copper a-piece, you kin have de lot fo’ two-bits ! ” says the lady. Then a mate comes along and they discuss the deal, finally going shares. No, of course you cannot understand it—this jargon of Bahamian street-trade. It is your introduction to the mysteries of our colonial coinage. The intricacies of English pounds, shillings and pence are awkward enough, but they are simplicity itself when compared with the mixed monies of the Bahamas.

That boy gave three-halfpence (English) or three cents (American) for his ground-nuts, and nine pence (eighteen cents) for his bananas. I

can discover no exact account of the origin of these terms "check" and "two-bits," but of the latter the following may possibly be an explanation. Generations ago, when coin of the realm was scarce in the West Indies, a system was devised—in Jamaica, I believe—by which a "bit" of a shilling was punched out, and passed as four pence halfpenny, the original coin still carrying its nominal value. Afterwards it was necessary to repeat this operation; hence "two-bits" became a recognised sum of money, equal to three quarters of the mutilated coin which still passed as a shilling. But now, in the Bahamas, "one bit" is an unknown quantity, just as "two-bits" is an unknown coin but denotes nine-pence. American gold or paper, or its exact equivalent in English coin, is called "long-money." Four shillings sterling (English) is called a "short dollar" as being worth only ninety-six cents (American). An English halfpenny is always a "cent"; and it is in American terms but English coin that most Bahamian business is done, especially in shipping affairs. A sponger—for example—will say he has shared "ten dollars"; an American would tell him it was only nine dollars and sixty cents; whereas it was, in fact, two pounds sterling!

But there is yet another complication—that of "sterling" and "currency" in English money. The former is the nominal standard value of English coin or Bahamian paper, and the latter represents half its value. An English shilling—for example—is called two shillings, sixpence is a shilling. This is the general custom of the colony, but only obtains—of course—in its local

transactions. Many merchants in Nassau are still obliged to reckon thus for the convenience of clients who know no other system. When goods are not bought and sold by dollars and cents (*i.e.* "short money") it is generally done by local "currency"; and most bills are made out in a way that mixes the two systems, as thus: "Four dollars, Three shillings, Eight cents"—which is, being interpreted, Seventeen shillings and ten pence sterling. Space does not permit speculation as to the origin of this strange financial medley, nor allow further illustrations of its curious working; but it may be said that there are still other values and denominations of coinage not mentioned here.

Is it not Théophile Gautier who says that the only difference between one country and another lies in the slang and the uniform of the police? If this be true the Bahamas cannot boast of any very unique features in either. The uniform of the Constabulary has been already pointed out, and as to our language—it speaks for itself. Like most of the millions of the Anglo-Saxon race, and in common with a large number of British subjects, we flatter ourselves that we speak English. But being a charitable folk, and living in glass houses, we do not throw stones. We import so much from the United States that it is only natural that quite a number of philological "fixins'" should have found their way here from the continent; and the *patois* of the Afro-Indian largely affects the speech of three quarters of the population. I believe persons have landed on these shores who expected to be obliged to learn a "Bahamian language";

but our modesty has not yet allowed us thus to characterize the local vernacular. We have our slang, it is true ; much of it has a maritime flavour, but many visitors will recognise familiar words. We have our intonations also ; but our most characteristic expressions only reveal their force to those who have lived here long and have listened with open ears and looked with sympathetic eyes. An observant philologist will find that many of the most vivid phrases—like so many that are called “ Americanisms ”—are interesting survivals of older English forms of speech.

To show how occupation, for example, influences language let a visitor lose himself in the course of a long and interesting walk. The luncheon hour finds him unable to discover the way to his hotel. He is in a Grant's Town lane, an object of some interest to a group of coloured people casually chatting round a garden gate. Approaching he asks to be directed on his way, and is told to “ Go to de west'ard corner, an' turn to de nort' an keep straight on till you come to de Market, an' den turn to de west'ard agen ! ” Not a word of right or left ; but always the points of the compass used to indicate direction ; which, after generations of sea-faring, is only to be expected. It is noticeable, again, how often “ she ” is used to describe things inanimate or of uncertain sex. It is simply because ships and boats, the most familiar objects of Bahamian life, are always so spoken of.

Beautiful gardens, strange trees, an unfamiliar flowers on every side attract the eye—

the great ceiba or silk-cotton tree behind the Post Office, and the fine avenue of Spanish laurel near the Library. Sights such as these, and strange customs and new people with dress and occupations quite unusual are amongst the characteristic charms of this coral city, the capital of Summerland.

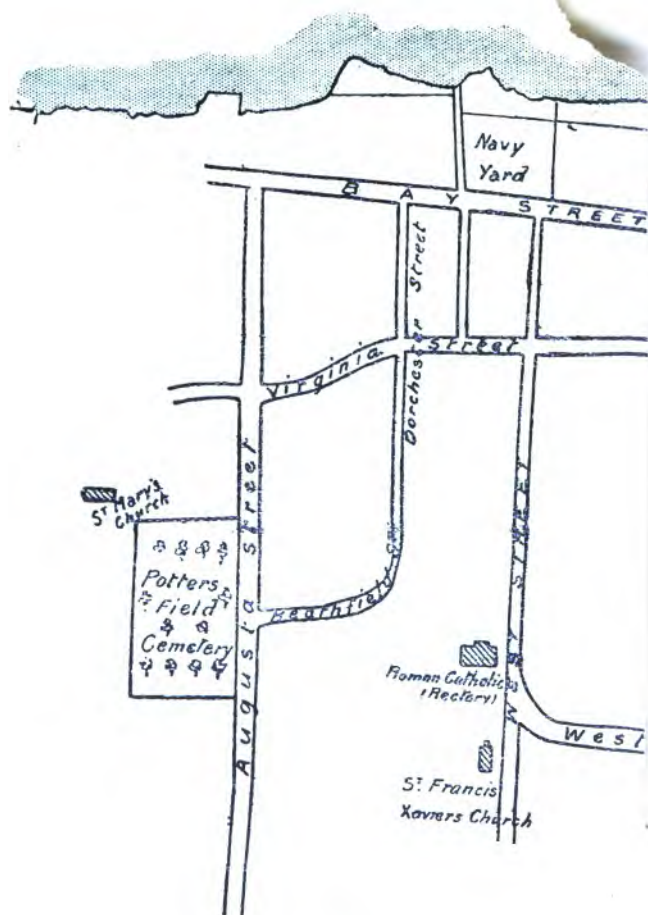
CHAPTER IV.

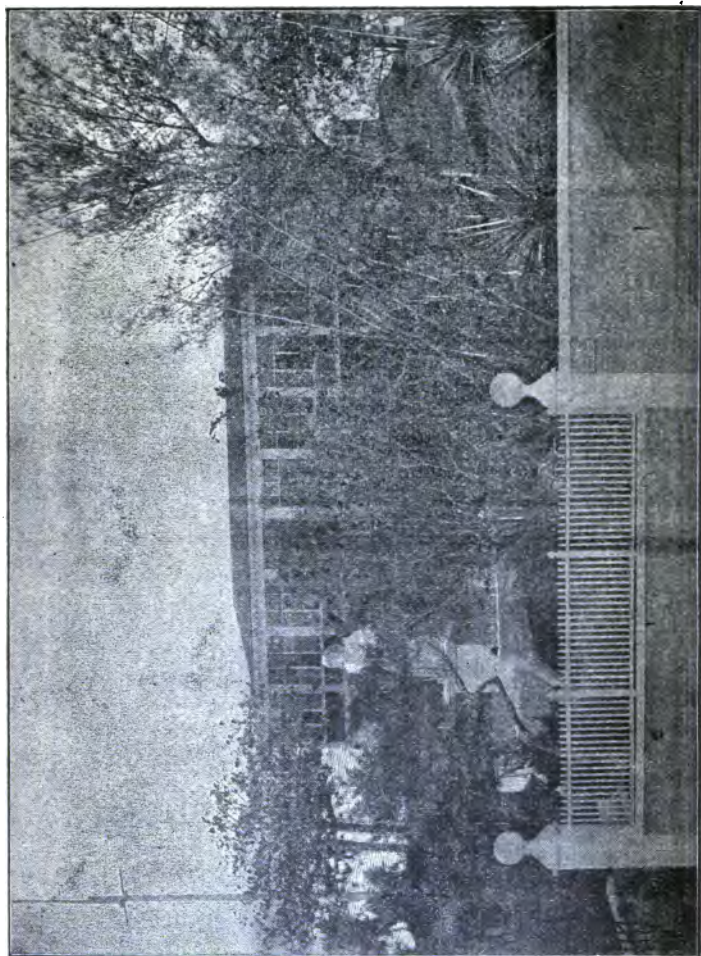
THE METROPOLIS OF THE BAHAMAS.

DIMINUTIVE and distant though it be,
Obscure and unimportant to the State,
Yet is this little colony elate—
A portion of the British Empire she !
Bahamian Ballads and Rhymes.

THE foregoing chapter may serve as an introduction to the general characteristics of Nassau as a sub-tropical city, set on a coral island, enjoying in the winter great advantages of climate, and peopled—for the most part—by a race of hardy, sea-faring, coloured folk. But as the visitor prolongs his stay the scenes at first unusual grow familiar, strange sights and customs appear ordinary, and gradually this coral city assumes a new interest as its commercial life and insular importance are discovered. For not only has Nassau unique climatic advantages and considerable native charm, but also some political and commercial distinction. As the capital of a British Colony it is the seat of a Government directly responsible to “the Powers that Be,” for the nonce, at the head of colonial affairs. Though it lies at the extremity of the cable, London holds the other end ; and however

15.





GOVERNMENT HOUSE.

unimportant or remote a dependency the Bahamas of to-day may be they have cost the British Crown no small anxiety and expense both to win and hold during the last three hundred years.

Government House stands at the head of George Street, on Mount Fitzwilliam, one of the highest points of the low range that forms the watershed of the island, on which are situated the principal residences of the city. This building was erected in 1801 by Governor Halkett. It is not an imposing structure but it is surrounded by extensive grounds and occupies a commanding situation whence an excellent view is obtained both over the island and out to sea. A statue of Columbus, which was modelled in London under the direction of Washington Irving, stands appropriately in front of the principal entrance. The flagstaff, from which the Union Jack flies daily—or the Royal Standard, on certain special occasions—and the armed sentry pacing to and fro at its foot, are the only outward signs of the character and importance of the building.

Here resides the Governor of the colony, the representative of His Majesty in this part of the Empire. His Excellency's full style and title is "Governor and Commander-in-Chief in and over the Bahama Islands, Vice-Admiral and Ordinary of the same," and he is usually—as at present—a Knight Commander of the Order of Saint Michael and Saint George. He exercises the principal executive authority, by Royal Commission, in virtue of which he institutes and determines the sessions of the Legislature and

possesses a negative on their proceedings, subject to the approbation of the Crown. In the ordinary processes of government, he is assisted by the Executive Council of eight members who are appointed by the Crown, usually upon the Governor's nomination; certain Government Officials are, *ex officio*, members of the Council. In addition to this the functions are shared by the two Houses of Legislature—the Legislative Council—consisting of a President and eight members appointed for life in the same way as the Executive Council—and a House of Assembly, consisting of a Speaker and twenty-eight members elected every seven years by the “free and independent” voters of all the colonial constituencies. These gentlemen are nearly all Nassau merchants, as very few out-island either care or can afford to come up to the capital and live there during the annual sessions of the House. But as several of the representatives have lived long upon the out-islands, and nearly all are intimately connected with them by business, their interests, are not so misunderstood as might, at first sight, appear inevitable. Thus, it will be seen, that in matters of government Nassau is the Bahamas—the capital focusses the life of the colony—as will appear even more clearly in considering commercial affairs. The Revenue of the Bahamas is not derived from direct taxation, of which there is practically none, but from Import duties regulated according to a certain tariff which is arranged and amended from time to time by the Government.

In the centre of the city, on the southern side of Bay Street at the corner of Parliament

Street, are the Public Buildings, three substantial edifices, of coral-limestone erected in 1812. The centre one—which has a handsome portico supported by columns—stands in the rear, the others flank it on east and west, forming a quadrangle open to the north. Entering the wide, paved hall of the principal building, the General Post Office lies to the right and the Court Room to the left. The Council Chamber, Supreme Court Registry, Jury Room, and Chief Justice's Chambers are on the second floor. Busts of Shakespeare and of H. R. H. The Duke of Saxe Coburg (who once visited Nassau) are among the ornaments of the Council Chamber. The eastern building contains the Treasury and Custom House, The Bank of Nassau, and the offices of the Colonial Secretary and Registrar of Records. On the ground-floor of the western building are the offices of The Attorney General, and The Surveyor General ; on the second storey is the House of Assembly, on the walls of which hang portraits of George III, his Consort, Queen Charlotte, and of Queen Victoria. The silver mace of the House of Assembly was brought by Loyalist refugees from South Carolina ; the following order concerning it was passed by the House.

“ RECORDS OF THE HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY—

Friday, 25th June, 1790.”

“ Mr. MacKenzie moved that John Wells, Esquire, be empowered and authorized to purchase from the person or persons having custody of the Silver Mace of the late Assembly of the Province of South Carolina, and that this House

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will provide for any sum or expense incurred by reason of said purchase.

The Police Court is held in a building behind the Post Office, where also the records of the Vice-Admiralty Court are kept, and the Stipendiary and Circuit Magistrates have their private office. The Guard Room of the Constabulary—above which is the Government Telegraph Office—is in Parliament Street, to the west of the Police Court. The Prison is a large and conspicuous building standing on the hill some distance down East Street. It was built in 1865, just after the blockade-running of the Southern ports ceased, when Nassau was wealthy and evil-doers abundant. It is fitted with modern appliances to insure both the health and security of the prisoners, many of whom may be seen in gangs employed in repairing the city streets and on other public work. The recently-erected Constabulary Barracks and Commandant's House lie to the north of the gaol.

After the Governor ranks the official head of the Judicial Department of the Government, the Chief Justice—a Bahamian lawyer of eminence and ability, knighted by Queen Victoria. The Attorney General is Public Prosecutor and legal adviser to the Government, while the two Stipendiary Magistrates—whether sitting in Nassau or on circuit among the out-islands—find ample scope for their energies in presiding over various courts. Each of the principal islands has its Resident Justice or Assistant Resident Justice, to assist whom in maintaining the majesty of the law there are several local Justices of the Peace.

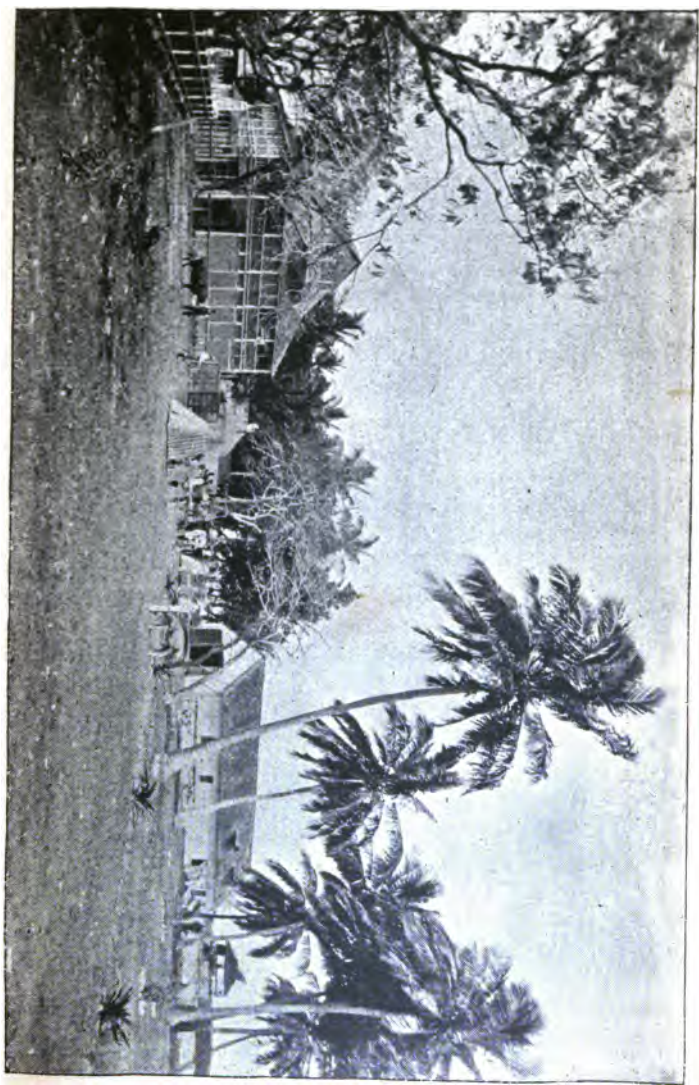
During His Excellency's occasional absences from the colony, and whenever an *interregnum* occurs, the Colonial Secretary becomes Administrator of the Government, as being the head of the Civil Department, and next in rank to the Governor. The finances of the Bahamas are under the control of the Receiver General and Treasurer. All questions of land, public-works, etc. are dealt with by the Surveyor General's Department. The Registrar of Records, the Postal, and the Board of Education officials do their work in or near the Public Buildings. There are also the authorities of the Port of Nassau, of the the New Providence Asylum, Nassau Prison and the Medical and Sanitary Departments, the centres of whose various spheres of influence lie in the regions round about. In addition to the departments mentioned, various committees or boards, as of Public Works, Pilotage, and the Nassau Library, assist in administering public monies and controlling public institutions. Here, as in the House of Assembly, and in various colonial offices, are Bahamians of honour, intelligence, and public spirit such as any small city might be proud of. Many of the best men of colony assist in the responsibilities of its public life.

In Bay Street, to the east of the Public Buildings, lie stores and offices of various sorts interspersed with dwelling-houses. Wide and well-kept cross streets run inland to the south, or give at intervals upon various wharves that line the northern shore. The offices of the Board of Trade, which controls the Imperial Light-house service, are on the left side of the street.

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Farther on, the harbour comes quite up to the road, as it does also near St. Matthew's Church. This is the oldest place of worship in the Bahamas, being built in 1800, and its early Norman architecture, clock-tower and spire, with the large and beautiful surrounding trees, make it an attractive and conspicuous object at this end of the city. The Eastern Parade, near here, is a favourite recreation ground, and has on its northern side a fine avenue of almond trees, at the western end of which stands Florence Villa, one of the most picturesque and comfortable residences in Nassau.

In the opposite direction, to the west of the Public Buildings in Bay Street, are the principal business houses of the city. Those on the northern side are built on land long since reclaimed from the harbour, and hurriedly run up to meet the exigences of the blockade-running trade. Many of those on the southern side have dwelling-houses above them, with piazzas overhanging the side-walk, under which are displayed both merchandise and the more perishable wares of the street vendors. The Masonic Hall stands prominent among these buildings. The Sponge Exchange—the Wall Street of Nassau—runs from Bay Street out to the wharves which line the harbour shore. Here, and in the offices and stores adjoining, most of the commercial affairs of the colony are arranged. In the harbour many sailing-vessels come and go and occasional steamers anchor off the Bar or venture inside if of light draught; hosts of sponging boats, mail schooners, and others that trade with foreign ports, and vessels that casually visit the colony



FLORENCE VILLA.

1. The first part of the document is a letter from the President of the United States to the Congress, dated January 3, 1862. It is a very important document, as it contains the President's annual message to Congress, which is a key document in the history of the United States.

2. The second part of the document is a letter from the Secretary of the Treasury to the Congress, dated January 3, 1862. It is a very important document, as it contains the Secretary's report on the state of the Treasury, which is a key document in the history of the United States.

3. The third part of the document is a letter from the Secretary of the Interior to the Congress, dated January 3, 1862. It is a very important document, as it contains the Secretary's report on the state of the Interior, which is a key document in the history of the United States.

4. The fourth part of the document is a letter from the Secretary of the War to the Congress, dated January 3, 1862. It is a very important document, as it contains the Secretary's report on the state of the War, which is a key document in the history of the United States.

5. The fifth part of the document is a letter from the Secretary of the Navy to the Congress, dated January 3, 1862. It is a very important document, as it contains the Secretary's report on the state of the Navy, which is a key document in the history of the United States.

6. The sixth part of the document is a letter from the Secretary of the State to the Congress, dated January 3, 1862. It is a very important document, as it contains the Secretary's report on the state of the State, which is a key document in the history of the United States.

7. The seventh part of the document is a letter from the Secretary of the War to the Congress, dated January 3, 1862. It is a very important document, as it contains the Secretary's report on the state of the War, which is a key document in the history of the United States.

8. The eighth part of the document is a letter from the Secretary of the Navy to the Congress, dated January 3, 1862. It is a very important document, as it contains the Secretary's report on the state of the Navy, which is a key document in the history of the United States.

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11. The eleventh part of the document is a letter from the Secretary of the Navy to the Congress, dated January 3, 1862. It is a very important document, as it contains the Secretary's report on the state of the Navy, which is a key document in the history of the United States.

12. The twelfth part of the document is a letter from the Secretary of the State to the Congress, dated January 3, 1862. It is a very important document, as it contains the Secretary's report on the state of the State, which is a key document in the history of the United States.

or carry freights among the islands, are lashed to the wharves or lying in the stream. Since September 1st, 1817, a light on Hog Island has shown the way across the bar into Nassau harbour to whose protection and safe anchorages the trade of the Bahamas has been contracting a very large debt during the last two hundred years.*

The spacious Market and the Government Ice House adjoining, are the most prominent buildings in Bay Street west of the Sponge Exchange, till one comes to the Vendue House—as it is still called—though devoted now to the Harbour Master's office and the warehouse of the Board of Pilotage. It was built in 1800, and here, for many years, public auctions were held. Formerly this was the method by which most of the import trade of the colony was carried on.

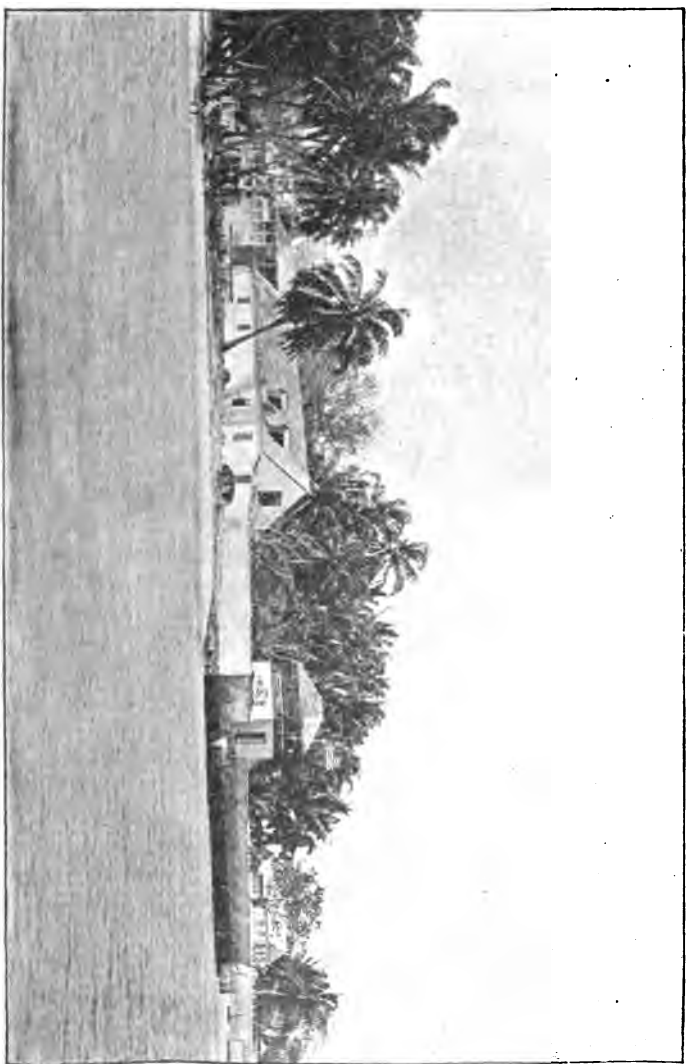
The accompanying map will assist the stranger easily to find his way in this little city. The lack of uniformity among the buildings and the number that are naturally out-standing make it extremely difficult to go astray. Only in the suburbs is that at all a possible contingency. Behind the hill lies a series of coloured settlements called (taking them in order from west to

* This extremely useful sheet of water was described by a certain French writer early in the Eighteenth century: "Son entrée est bouchée par une Barre, sur laquelle un Naviare de cinq cens tonneaux ne passeroit pas sans un extrême danger; mais toutes les forces navales d' Angleterre servient en sureté dans L'intérieur. (" Histoire Générale des Voyages—etc: à Paris, chez Didot, a la Bible d' or 1746—Vol. XV. p. 641.") True as is the first part of this sentence, the latter is amusing in view of the present size of the British Navy.

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east) Delancy Town, Bain's Town, and Grant's Town. They are all named after individuals, the latter commemorating a Governor of the colony ; and it is wandering through the shady lanes of this fruitful valley that the visitor will most vividly realise his absence from his northern home.

Of the public buildings of Nassau the most imposing are the places of worship. Christ Church, the Anglican Cathedral, is a plain stone building situated in George Street, and was erected in 1837 on the site of a much older church. It consists of a nave, two aisles, and a western tower containing the City clock. The doors and windows are in the early pointed style, and all the interior arrangements are in good taste. It contains sittings for twelve hundred persons. In the Church Hall near-by Christ Church Sunday School and the Grammar School are held. St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church is a handsome place of worship and, together with St. Andrew's Hall adjoining, forms a conspicuous block of buildings in Prince's Street. The former was built in 1810, the latter in 1873. The Church has sittings for five hundred persons. In the Hall is conducted the Young Ladies' High School and the Sunday School in connection with the Church. On the western side of Frederick Street stands Trinity Methodist Church. It occupies the site of a larger church destroyed by the hurricane of 1866 shortly after its completion. It is a fine building, in the Gothic style of architecture, erected from plans prepared in England. A school-room and class rooms are under the church which is reached by



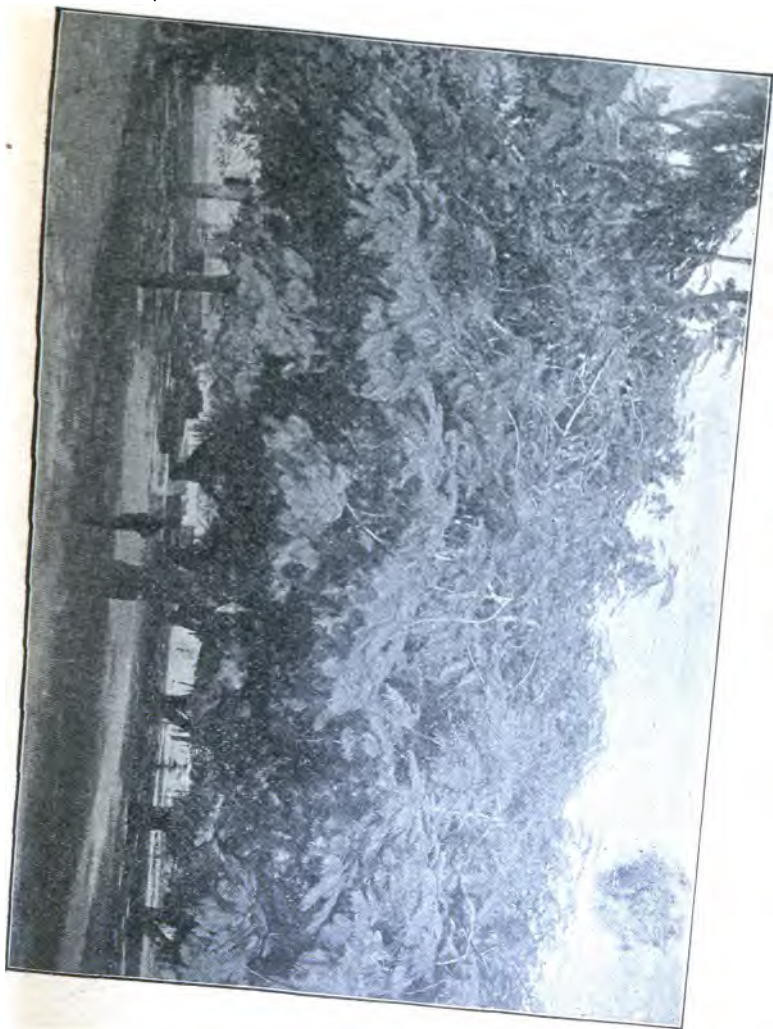
FLORENCE VILLA FROM THE HARBOUR.

double flights of marble steps at the eastern and western ends. It has sittings for about eight hundred people.

The Roman Catholic Church of St. Francis Xavier stands at the end of West Hill Street at the corner of West Street. It is a pretty little Gothic building, the foundation stone of which was laid in 1885. Within its ample grounds are St. Benedict's Hall and the Houses of the free schools conducted by the Sisters of Charity. A short distance down West Hill Street is the striking building wherein is held the Academy of St. Francis Xavier. One of the best situated buildings in the city stands to the north of St. Francis Xavier's church and was originally built by the Earl of Dunmore for a Government House. It afterwards became the Military Hospital, but, on its sale by the Government a few years ago, it was acquired by the Roman Catholic mission and is now used as a priest's residence. In Virginia Street is St. Mary's Anglican Church, built in 1868 to replace the original structure which was destroyed in a hurricane two years before. Its churchyard contains the tomb of Dr. Caulfield, first Bishop of Nassau, who died of yellow fever in 1863. The School House lies to the west of the church, and together they form a neat and appropriate group of buildings in a locality otherwise lacking in architectural interest.

Turning eastward again, Victoria Hall in Charlotte Street is an attractive building. It was built by the Methodists of the Bahamas in 1887 to commemorate the Jubilee of Queen

Victoria's reign, and is used for the Boys' Department of Queen's College and for various public functions for which it is well adapted by reason of its size and central situation. The Public Library in Shirley Street is a most interesting building, both on account of its appearance and history. In structure it is not unlike a mosque and was formerly the prison. In the cool alcoves where now are stored the twelve thousand well-selected volumes of the Nassau Library, boozy blockade-runners and evil-doers of other sorts were formerly incarcerated. From the parapet around its minaret-like dome a charming view can always be obtained and a cool seat found even in the hottest weather. Zion Baptist Church stands at the corner of East Street, just beyond the Royal Victoria Hotel. It is a large plain stone building erected in 1835, and will hold about seven hundred persons. A commodious schoolroom is attached to the southern end. Salem Baptist Union Chapel in Parliament Street is a stone building of recent construction having been built in 1893. It contains sittings for 350. The New Providence Asylum consists of a series of substantial buildings well situated in extensive grounds on the southern side of Shirley Street. It was established in 1809 and embraces an Asylum for lunatics and for the sick and aged poor, a hospital, public dispensary and leper house. The staff consists of two medical officers, nurses, attendants, etc., and a visiting chaplain. Additional accommodation for forty patients was provided by the erection of the Victoria Jubilee Ward completed in 1893. The Alexandra Infirmary, so called in honour of Her Majesty the Queen was opened recent-



GROVE OF ROYAL POINCIANA TREES NEAR LIBRARY.

ly, and is a great acquisition to this Institution. Farther up Shirley Street is a commodious Methodist Church called Ebenezer ; it was built of stone in 1848, superseding a smaller wooden church that had been built in 1840. This churchyard and that of St. Matthew's contain many graves of considerable age and local interest.

Outside the city, mainly to the east, are several country houses used as summer resorts or occasional dwellings by their owners, and frequently let to visitors ; some of them are inhabited all the year round. The good roads make walking, cycling, or driving to or from these residences a matter of no inconvenience—at least, in winter ; and in the summer, when they are chiefly used, there is neither much necessity or desire to go into town. Business is slack, (for the vessels “lay up” during the hurricane season from August to October) visitors are absent, many friends are away North, and the heat is intense. Procrastination goes unpunished and its booty unredeemed.

CHAPTER V.

PLACES OF INTEREST NEAR NASSAU.

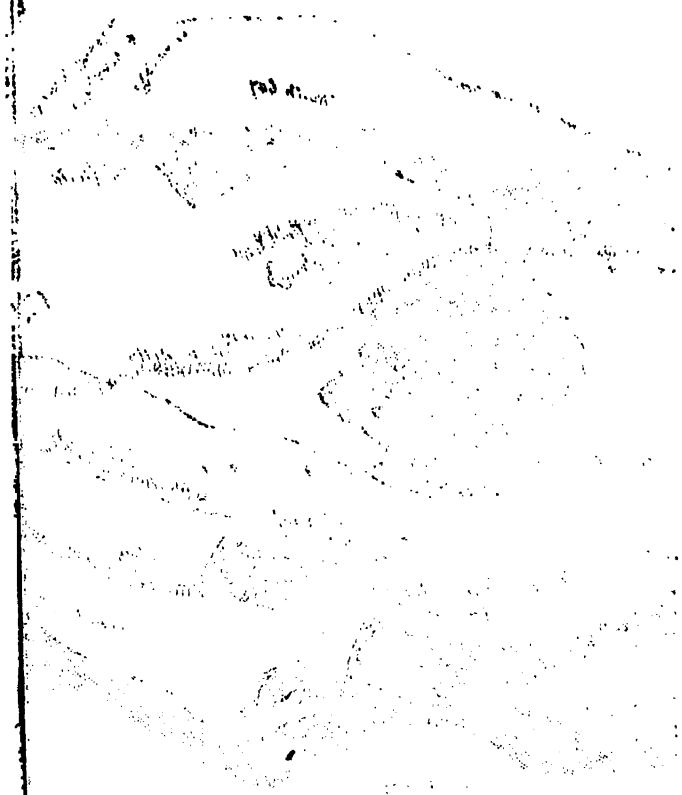
SYLVAN glades by song-birds haunted,
Ancient ramparts where, undaunted,
Fragrant blossoms climb ;
Pathless woods and lakes enchanted,
Coral groves by Neptune planted
Neath the sea sublime.

Songs of Summerland.

TWO old forts quite near to Nassau, and another at the eastern end of the harbour, indicate the far-off days of " battle, murder, and sudden death " through which New Providence has passed. But they have long since retired from active service, and are useful now only as objects of interest to the antiquarian, as the *termini* of walks or drives, as trysting places, or as subjects of the casual Kodak.

Fort Charlotte stands on a hill, outside the western end of the city, facing the entrance to the harbour. Its foundations are of great age and are believed to have been built by the Spaniards, but it was completed by the Earl of Dunmore in 1788. At the foot of the hill a water-battery of four guns was placed and beyond it a raised esplanade—partly protective but mainly

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ornamental—was formerly a favourite resort. On the brow of the hill a fixed wooden bridge spans the moat which protects the northern side of the fort, whose grey embattled sides rise sheer from its dry bed. It is a warlike structure, with its bastions and ancient furnaces for heating shot, its immensely thick walls pierced for cannon and loopholed for musketry. But, unfortunately, only fragmentary and uncertain information can be obtained as to its history. It is, however, certain that it has seen little or no active service, as Nassau's most adventurous days were over when it was built. Dungeons and corridors are cut in the solid rock on which it rests, and are reached by a narrow tortuous stairway at the foot of which is a well of cool and pleasant water. It is said that a subterranean passage connects it with the old Government House, one mile away, but this is probably incorrect. On the same hill, where an obelisk now stands, (which—in conjunction with the beacon on Toney Rock—is used as a guide to vessels entering the harbour) the military barracks were situated ; but they were condemned unhealthy and pulled down in 1837. Now the forts are dismantled, the guns thrown from their carriages, and Nassau harbour is unprotected save by its eloquent defencelessness.

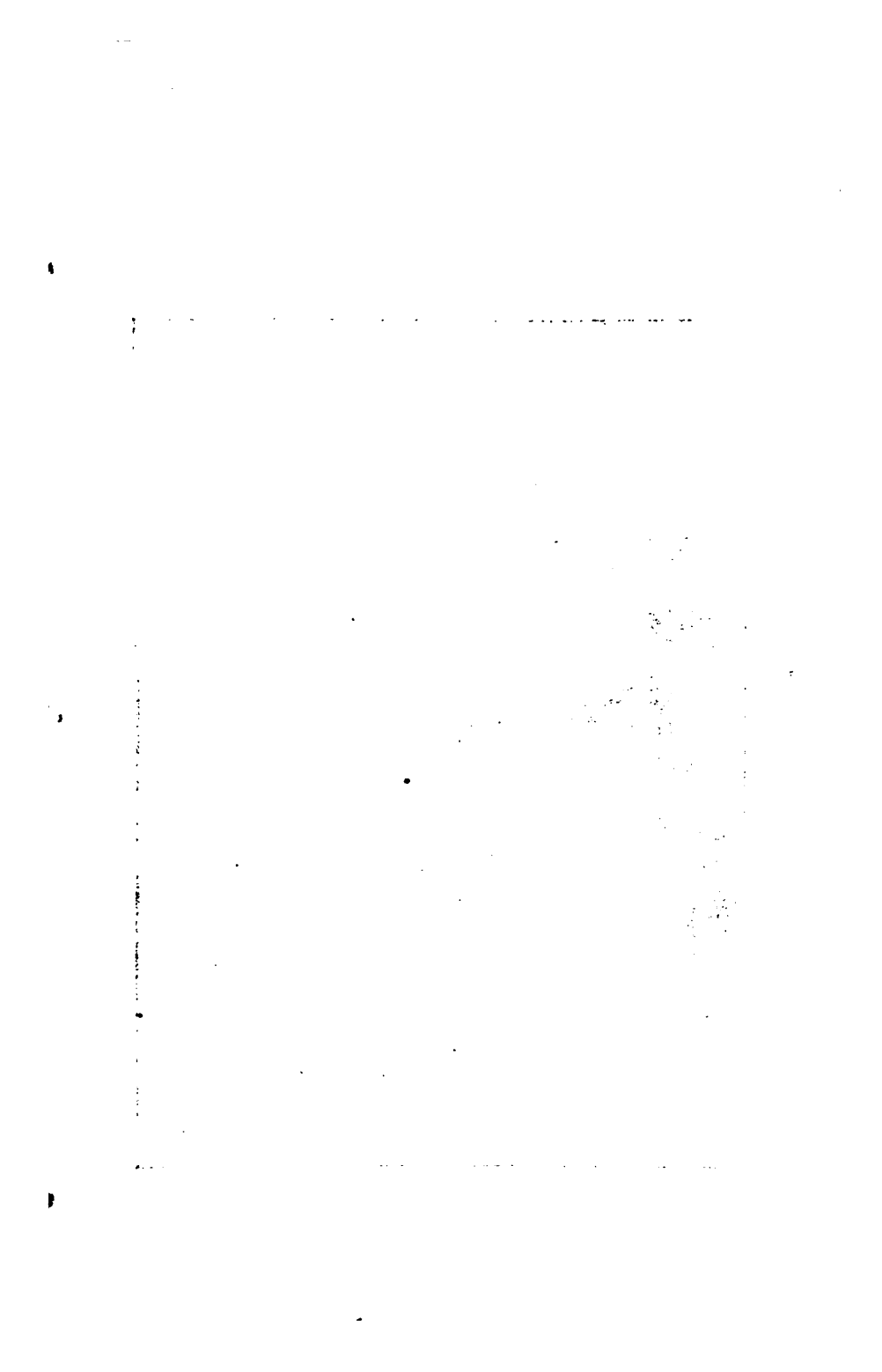
Instead of soldiers troops of lizards, bright, chameleon-coated, perform their evolutions on the sunny ramparts ; and flying squadrons of sweet singing birds make their nests in the fragrant bush around the fort, and even venture, unafraid, into the precincts of the place itself. Companies of swift, buff-coloured bats dwell in

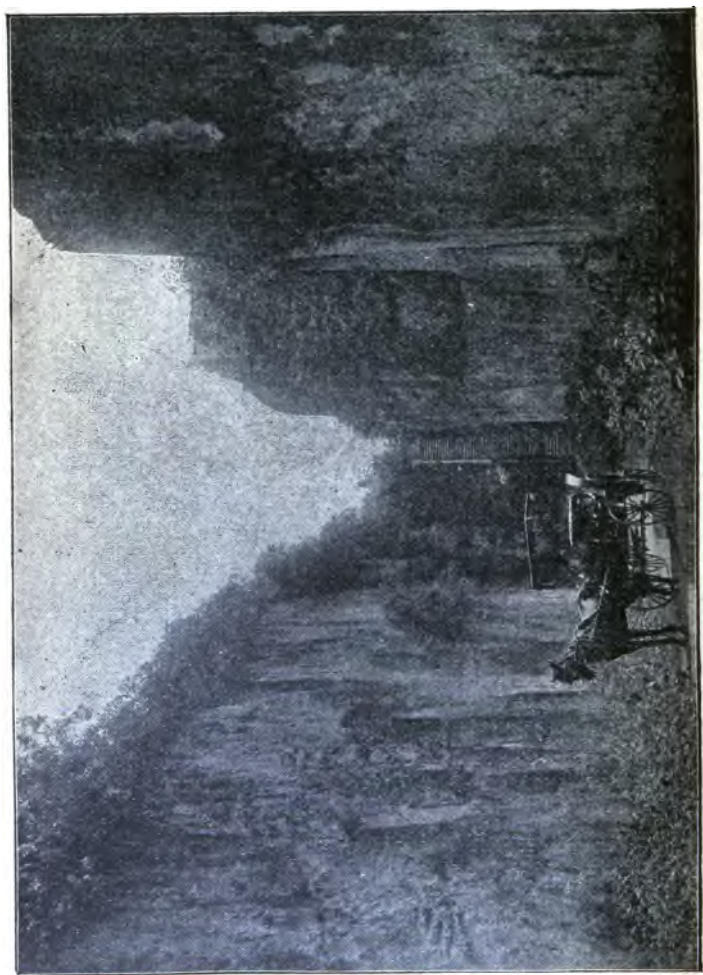
the cool darkness of the subterranean chambers now given up to them and to the ghosts of King George's soldiers who haunt the place after sunset, clad in their curious, old-world uniforms. All day they keep in hiding lest the vision of a lady in cycling costume or golfing should give them a fatal shock, which has already befallen one or two veterans, who have taken back to The Shades such a message concerning *fin de siècle* manners and customs as is likely to prejudice the Future of many fair ones of this present age.

But intending visitors need have no fear of exploring the lower parts of the fort during the day; the ghosts are eminently respectable, and submit to the proper authorities like the best of good Bahamians. Strangers will not be surprised to hear "God save the King" sung by quavering old voices floating out on the damp air. Our cousins from the continent will excuse the old men's inability to sing "The Star-spangled Banner," as they lived in the dark ages before it was composed.

N. B. It is no use trying to "tip" the ghosts. Their loyalty is above suspicion. They will sell neither old uniforms as curiosities nor ancient information concerning the customs of the Bahamas. Do not ask them what they think of General Washington; the Authorities are particularly anxious that your patriotic feelings should not be wounded. But you may be pleased to hear what they have to say about the Spaniards—if you can get them to tell.

Fort Fincastle stands on Bennet's Hill a short distance to the south-east of the Royal Victoria Hotel. It was built by Lord Dunmore in 1789 and received its name from one of his





QUEEN'S STAIRCASE.

titles. It is a smaller and much less imposing structure than Fort Charlotte, though it occupies a commanding situation from which is obtained an excellent view of the island. Seen from the north-east it looks like the model of an old paddle-wheel steamboat cut in stone, coming, "bow on"—so to say. This effect is heightened by the lofty spar, with yards, which stands upon the upper stone platform, from which is signalled—by an ingenious system of flags—a description of approaching vessels and the direction whence they come. Sheep graze upon the short grass at the foot of the ramparts, or bask contentedly within the embattled enclosure. The peace-loving Lucayans, whose land does not admit of ploughing, have not turned their swords into ploughshares, but their forts into sheepfolds; and instead of converting their spears into pruning hooks have made their cannon into convenient seats for interested tourists. This is the Bahamas' contribution to the coming Age of Peace.

The *Queen's Staircase* is a flight of steps, cut in the solid rock, which leads down from the east of Fort Fincastle into a deep gorge, about seventy feet high, which is the southern termination of Union Street. The lofty, weather-beaten sides of this valley help to an understanding of the geological formation of the island. It is a picturesque spot, but cannot claim to have any romantic or military significance. It was probably *not* a "masked road between the fort and the shore," as some writers have imagined; but it more likely represents a laudable attempt to turn a street which would otherwise have

ended in a disused stone-quarry into a way of access.

Fort Montague stands at the eastern entrance to the harbour, and is reached by a pleasant drive of some two miles out from the city. The engineer who erected it, Lieut. Peter Bruce, has left in his memoirs (published at London in 1782) an interesting account of his stay in Nassau. He came out in 1741 with instructions to fortify the city, for which the Government had granted £1600. He found Fort Nassau in ruins, and after temporarily repairing it, determined to build a thoroughly good fort at the east end of the harbour—as that had, hitherto, been usually attacked first. He experienced great inconvenience in procuring stone, “there being no such thing as a wheel carriage in the island.” At this juncture a refugee from “the Havannah” brought news of a proposed Spanish raid, and the principal citizens—realising their defenceless position—hurriedly brought sufficient stone for the fort in their boats and vessels, together with mastic trees for palisades. Governor Tinker laid the foundation stone on June 10th, 1741, and called the fort “Montague” after the Duke of that name, and the water-battery “Bladen’s.” It was completed in July, 1742 and formally opened by the Governor with some ceremony in the presence of the officials and chief inhabitants. It mounted eight eighteen-pounders, three nine-pounders, and six six-pounders.

That its former glory has departed may sufficiently be seen by comparing its present condition with Bruce’s description. “Within the

fort is a terraced cistern containing thirty tons of rain-water, and so contrived as to receive all that falls within the fort, with a drain to carry off the superfluous water; there are barracks for officers and soldiers, a guard-room and a powder magazine—bomb proof—to contain ninety-five barrels of powder; two of its sides are close upon the sea, and the two land sides are well secured by mastic palisades." But the present ruins help to verify the author's words. Moreover, it has had a fair share of hard knocks during its long life. It was captured by the Americans under Commodore Hopkins in March 1776, and again by the Spaniards in 1781, who in turn were expelled by the Loyalists under Colonel De Vaux in April 1783.

The favourite drives around Nassau lie mainly to the eastward. Some distance beyond Fort Montague, in a pleasant valley, singularly un-tropical in appearance, is the country seat where Lord Dunmore resided, now called *The Hermitage*, surrounded by a noble grove of ceibas and palms, bamboos, casuarinas, and other stately trees.

The first road that leads to the right, past the Hermitage, goes over the hill and through narrow cuttings in the coral limestone past the village green of Sandilands. This and the neighbouring hamlets—indiscriminately called *Fox Hill*—are interesting settlements of coloured people, in whose orchards fruit may be bought and plucked straight from the trees, cocoa-nut water drunk *au naturel*, and, generally, an acquaintance made with the descendants

of generations of slaves who are always glad to sit and discourse with the millionaires who drive past their gates. (All visitors are considered, and are generally called "millionaries" by the unsophisticated coloured folk, and—compared with them—they probably are. Hence, bright-eyed, scantily-clad urchins chase the passing carriages shouting, "Boss, give me a penny" or "*Do* trow us a cent marm"! with similar shoutings for *largesse*; and pariah dogs join the hue and cry with hungry yelpings.)

Passing the road to Fox Hill another terminus is found at the *Swing Gate*, whence the road continues up hill to the south. Cyclists must stop here, and carriages can go but a little farther. At the top of the ascent, overgrown with bush, are the foundations of a fort evidently very old. All that is visible now, besides fragments of walls, is a semi-circular breast-work on whose weather-worn *glacis* may still be seen the holes cut for *warri*, a favourite game of West-African negroes. This is the extreme eastern point of the island and commands a pleasing view to seaward. At the other end of the island, the extreme western point, stands another fort—*Old Fort* it is called whose thick walls now do duty as portions of a picturesque house. The remains of other batteries are to be seen elsewhere but are of no special interest, except to show that, long ago, New Providence was considered worth both defence and attack by nations which now find objects of contention in other quarters.

The Phosphorescent Lake, on the estate known as Waterloo, is quite the most remarkable

"show-place " on the island. It is reached by a short drive to the east along Shirley Street. It is an artificial excavation of the coral rock, about eight acres in extent, made for the purpose of storing turtle. It is only a few hundred yards from the sea, with which it is connected by a narrow canal, opened or closed by a sluice. The ruin of an old house stands within the grounds, which must some time ago, have been as handsome as they are extensive, and even now are picturesque enough when viewed by daylight. But a dark quiet night is needed to see the lake at its best. Standing on the stone terrace that is built out to the water, nothing unusual is seen in the dark, quiet pool at one's feet. The heavy shadows of the surrounding bush overhang the edge of the lake, and palm trees, like plumed sentinels, toss their unquiet crest against a back-ground of starlit sky. Stepping into the skiff that lies alongside and pushing out, the wonder at once begins. A broad diamond arrow widens away from the bow; the wake is a lane of living fire, and every sweep of the oar-blades makes a crescent of ghostly light beneath the placid surface, on which every drop that falls is a gleaming gem. Startled fish leave trails of splendour as they hurry to lonelier haunts; and an occasional turtle, moving more sedately, looks like a huge revolving moon hastening into eclipse.

Presently a boy plunges overboard from the terrace, and the wonder rises to a climax. Dante's *Inferno* comes at once to mind. Here is a body in torment, bathed in lambent flame! Every stroke increases the ghastly illusion; his

form is outlined in fire ; clouds of bright vapour glimmer above his course, and a diamond shower descends upon his devoted head. The combined movement of boat and oars, swimmer and fish, rouses all the latent phosphorescence of the lake, and seems to make a maelstrom of moving light—lines and showers and circles, sheets of quivering flame, and waves of fire rising and falling spreading from shore to shore. It is as though the *Aurora Borealis* had wandered south and lost their way and become imprisoned in this Bahamian lake, and started from their slumber on dark winter nights agonising to escape to their distant northern home.

However often the water is changed the effect is still the same ; and though the water has—I believe—several times been analysed, no adequate cause has yet been found for the phenomenon. It is said to be unique, and is certainly different, both in kind and degree, from the phosphorescence seen on the ocean in these latitudes.

A typical drive through the pine woods of the interior leads to “ the lakes,” called, respectively, *Killarney* and *Cunningham*. They lie in a south-westerly direction about eight miles from the city. They are some distance apart and are separated by the Baillou Hill range, which here attains a height of about one hundred and twenty feet. The former is three miles long from east to west, and nearly as broad. The latter is much smaller ; but their little mangrove islands,—haunted by flocks of wild duck—the charm of the surrounding woods, and the placid

green expanse of the water, make them well worth visiting and capital places for picnics. Both are brackish, shallow, and rise and fall with the tide.

Beyond the Baillou Hills, in the heart of the pine-barren, lies the *Mermaid's Pool*. After a drive of some distance along the Carmichael Road, several tracks through the woods are seen leading off to the left. Here the assistance of a guide is needed, for though the third track is not difficult to find it is quite impossible for the uninitiated to strike the right spot at which to turn off into the "forest primeval." Under the most favourable circumstances it is an arduous undertaking, and both pluck and endurance are required—especially if the wind be southerly—to bear the fatigues of the search, to say nothing of the possibility of playing the part of Bahamian "babes in the wood." For all around stands

"The mute arboreal army of tall pines."

all so utterly alike that one cannot trace one's way by any distinctive trees. Thousands of them rise, straight and sombre, in stately phalanxes, out of the palmetto-scrub and the sturdy bracken; and the sunlight struggles through them upon patches of long stalked daisies or purple orchids.

Suddenly one comes upon the pool, a large oval aperture in the rock descending sheer to the placid surface of the water, which seems to be immensely deep and of a dark green hue. It is sixty-two feet, eight inches in diameter, and

at the southern shore measures forty-one feet in depth. The water, though still brackish, has evidently been filtered to a considerable extent by its passage through miles of coral limestone. The scanty red soil of the pine-barren is washed by the rain down the rocky sides, leaving purple patches in many places; these, reflected in the lake, look like masses of submerged rubies, and heighten the effect of pines and palmettos mirrored in its still depths. A wonderful quiet haunts the spot; no birds flit about the branches; not a beast of any kind is seen; only a few water insects flit over the surface of the pool, and the wind whispers in the tree-tops. It is not difficult to imagine the mermaids coming up from their caves and sitting on the hoary rocks, combing their long hair and singing strange unearthly melodies.

The hamlet of *Carmichael*, seven miles southwest of Nassau, and the fishing-village of *Adelaide*—eight miles beyond it on the south side of the island—form objective points for pleasant drives, which will furnish subjects of enquiry on many matters—social, botanical, or geological—that may be of interest to the stranger.

Many caves are found beneath the little hills of the Bahamas, but the largest and most picturesque of them are not upon the island of New Providence. Eleuthera, Cat Island, and Crooked Island furnish the finest specimens. There are, however, caves in the Baillou Hill range—some but little known and seldom visited—that are interesting enough. Those commonly called “the caves,” by the side of the western road

some eight miles out of Nassau, are neither very large nor picturesque ; others, near there, but further inland, will better repay a visit. The best of them are cool, bat-haunted caverns, like the dusty crypt of a Gothic Cathedral, carpeted with deposits of soft brown dust called "cave-earth," locally used as a fertilizer. The sunlight pierces through occasional shafts and falls in lanes of light, cleaving the gloom, and emphasising the surrounding shadows. Stalactites of soft limestone depend from the groined, arched roofs through which the roots of many trees have pierced and now stand, like, pillars, fixed into the uneven floor. Here the imagination can run riot, fancying the caves to be the catacombs of Carib chieftains—as, indeed, some of them have been discovered to be—or the haunts of wicked pirates in the old adventurous days.

I have left till the last all mention of that which will probably be the object of supreme interest to all who visit these shores, and that is—the *sea*, with its many charms, and the wonders of the life within its depths. Something has already been said of the exquisite colours in which the water of these parts appears. This ocean of luminous beauty is largely and variously inhabited by corals, shell-fish, things that creep or swim, some born to be the prey of hungry man, and some to be his terror—creatures of colour, size, and structure so utterly different or so marvellously combined that even appetite or terror is touched with admiration, and the cold, keen eye of science is suffused with a warm gleam of wonder and delight. "*Sea Gardens*" as they are called, abound in Bahamian waters.

In Nassau harbour, in a channel called *The Narrows*, between Hog Island and Athol Island, is a good specimen of them. Their beauty of construction, the charm of form and colour, and the strange varieties of life they display, quite baffle description, and entirely refuse to be concentrated into a name. So we call them "sea-gardens" for want of a better title, and take visitors out to look at them through water-glasses—which are simply wooden buckets with glass bottoms. And in proportion to the size of their souls and their quickness of imagination, they who go out politely curious return amazed, enraptured, dumb with wonder and delight. Darwin's opinion of such scenes may be read in the chronicle of the *Beagle's* famous voyage, where he quotes the Queen of Sheba's saying, "I believed not the words till I came, and mine eye had seen it : and, behold, the half was not told me."

Purple fans and yellow feathers in tall waving clusters rise out of sandy valleys lying under the lee of the coral hills. Beds of "rose-coral," and fringes of "lace-coral," masses of "brain-coral," and tall, graceful branches of "finger-coral," are found on different portions of the reef, all utterly white, exquisite in form, and grouped with an infinite grace. Brown and orange sea-stars lie silhouetted against the white sandy floor ; spiny urchins, and long, grey sea-cucumbers crawl among the tentacled annelids and anemonies. Fishes—that look as though they had stolen their hues from some errant rainbow—flit slowly in and out of the coral grottoes, or make swift, erratic dashes after their almost invisible prey. Some of these creatures

are gorgeous—crimson and emerald, yellow and dark blue, tinted in shades indescribable, streaked with orange and black and silver, starred and spotted with pink and grey and deep, imperial purple. Several have long wavy filaments to their fins ; many look mild, not to say senseless ; while others have high foreheads which suggests an intellect only found in higher forms of life. But all add to the charm and completeness of this “ world of wave-encompassed wonder.”

CHAPTER VI.

THE SOCIAL LIFE OF NASSAU.

The Queen : "Say you these islanders are pleasant folk"?

Columbus : "Aye, noble lady ; their most happy land
A kind sincerity and genial grace
Begets in their behaviour : the bright sun
And bracing ocean breezes make them thus."

A Drama of The Dabblers.

"Perhaps there are fewer countries more favourable to female beauty than this and the adjacent parts of the continent. I have nowhere observed more delicacy united with a spirited expression of countenance." *McKinnen's Tour in The Bahamas, 1800—p. 386.*

THE Social Life of the Bahamas is naturally moulded by the circumstances wherein it is set. Geographical conditions, both physical and political, commercial affairs, and climatic influences, combine to exert their power upon our social possibilities, to determine our capacity for recreation and the form thereof. We are all victims of heredity and environment ; and, in these latitudes, heat and insularity, each inevitable and powerfully operative, suffice to indicate the latter.

A legend is told concerning an Englishman of a certain sort, who spent some time in Am-

erica and while there was greatly impressed by the fact that everyone he met seemed to be so tremendously busy.

“ I notice you have no *Gentlemen* here ”! he said, on one occasion, to a friend.

“ What do you mean by *Gentlemen* ”? his friend enquired.

“ Well, I mean—you seem to have no men who do nothing—no leisure class ” was the reply.

“ Oh, yes we have ! ” the American answered. “ We have plenty of men who do nothing. But we don't call them gentlemen : we call them *Tramps* ! ”

I trust the local application of this story will be sufficiently obvious. Bahamian gentlemen are all busy—sometimes ; and some are busy all the time. Though the *genus* tramp is not unknown amongst us we do not confound things that differ nor employ misleading terms in such a connection. And here comes in the secret use of any previous saving clause. To one born and brought up in a semi-tropic island-colony the rush and strain of northern business life or social duties is alike unknown and unnecessary. Some amongst us can do less work in a greater amount of time than many of our continental neighbours ; and we must all acknowledge an inclination to sins of omission ; that is why the Bahamian climate is such a splendid rest-cure for overstrained persons.

With the thermometer anywhere between 80 and 100 degrees it is not difficult to take Mark Twain's advice and "never put off till to-morrow what you can leave till the day after to-morrow;" though *manana* is a word unused amongst us. My point, however, is this—that business claims a certain portion of the Bahamian day, which leaves only a certain proportion of our time available for the amenities of social affairs.

We have only a certain fixed time in which to play. At 6 a.m. most Nassau stores are open, and many offices; and business generally begins about that hour. Meal hours cannot always be exactly observed in a country where so much depends on wind and weather, the arrival or detention of vessels. So the eight or nine o'clock breakfast hour, the mid-day luncheon interval, and the dining period are often set aside or altered in such a fashion as to wreck many social schemes and give an air of uncertainty to social functions.

It is, again, the heavy hand of commerce which, in many cases, curtails our social possibilities. Most Bahamian incomes are inadequate to support an extensive or expensive scale of entertainment. Goodwill and geniality are by no means wanting, and much successful, modest entertaining goes forward in our intervals of leisure. But elaborate dances or dinners, given with any regularity or frequency are not usual even in the metropolis. Nor are Nassau houses generally constructed with a view to such things, simply because they do not often

take place. Though the usual dining hour in the Bahamas lies in the region of 3 p.m., the hour of seven or eight—so much more suitable in a hot climate—has become increasingly popular of late years ; and the moon-lit verandahs, in the sultry summer months, made fragrant by the odours of frangipanni, jasmine, or alamander, form ideal arbours in which to lounge and chat or smoke the post-prandial cigar. No hosts more solicitous for the comfort of their guests, more genuinely anxious to give pleasure, or more gratified by their friends' satisfaction, are to be found than in Nassau.

Three influences combine to form the social life of Nassau. These are : the official life of this miniature metropolis, the various clubs formed for purposes of recreation—chiefly outdoor, and the Church life of the city.

The lady who presides at Government House—whether she be the wife, sister, or daughter of His Excellency—is officially leader of the social life of Nassau. Then there are the other Government Officials, some English, others Bahamian, most of whom are married. Several may have been associated in other colonies, or may have mutual friends at Home, and so have, in some degree, a common past as well as the ties of their present position to give cohesion to their intercourse. Also, like all bodies of persons whose official history, status, and even salary, are published and circulated in a Book, a kind of *camaraderie* unites them, gives tone to their life, and colour to their conversation. This is so with all the servants of the State, whether local

or imported; all look forward to promotion, make the best of their present circumstances, take their share—after office hours—in the social life of the place, and in moments of dissatisfaction comfort themselves with the reflection “here we have no continuing city.”

There is also the honourable corps of “leading citizens” who, though unsalaried, help to bear the responsibilities of the government. Officially they may be said to have their eye not so much upon the Empire as upon the Colony. They are the popularly elected or officially appointed guardians of local interests as distinguished from, though related to, Imperial concerns. As being personally involved in the commerce of Bahamas their point of view is not quite the same as that of those who are simply officials.

Years ago, the officers of the Garrison used to form a potent factor in social affairs. But there are now no troops in Nassau. We are, however, reminded of the “might, majesty, dominion, and power” of Great Britain by the occasional visits of Men-o’-War to our shores. The Bahamas is under the protection of the North American and West Indian squadron, and the Admiral, now and then, sends a cruiser or a gunboat to Nassau, just to see that we are behaving ourselves and that no one is molesting us. Being such children of the foam we naturally find naval men to be congenial spirits, and the advent of a “ship” is always welcome and gives a great impetus to entertainment.

It is the official life of Nassau—so entirely influenced by England—that causes visitors

from the States to tell us how utterly un-American we are. Nothing else will account for the fact, on which our cousins so constantly remark. Here is a group of islands, geographically a natural annex of the Continent, only forty miles from it, doing nearly all its business there, and having many social connections with it—but, as it happens, belonging to the British Empire. And, “How thoroughly *English* Nassau is”! say they. As a matter of fact, two distinct tendencies influence the social life of the Bahamas. Our commercial relationships make, in the main, for Americanising us; while all our official interests tend to Anglicise us. That the latter is more powerful our visitors from the Great Republic seem to imply; while most English people, coming freshly to the colony, say how *American* we are in customs, speech, and dress! So much for different points of view.

It may be remarked, in this connection, that Cricket, not Basebell, is *the* game of the Bahamian young men. There is a host of Cricket Clubs in Nassau, but I know of no Baseball Club, though—I believe—an occasional game is played on the Eastern Parade under the leadership of certain eager spirits who acquired the art in America. But cricketing interests—as is natural in a British Colony—form a social cement of some adhesiveness; and a cricket match of any importance is generally well patronised by spectators. Polo is also played, and, occasionally in the cooler weather football—Rugby, as a rule. Indeed no fault can be found with the young men of Nassau for want of athletic inclination. It is sometimes astonishing to see how

much is done in this way during the height of the Summer.

In a climate so charming during nearly half the year it is inevitable that nearly all recreation should be of the open-air order ; and those Clubs that include ladies as well as men are, of course, most popular. Among these the Nassau Lawn Tennis Club holds the place of honour. In spite of occasional difficulties in the matter of courts, this club has cheerfully held on its way for many years, and an occasional Tournament gives impetus to the game. Many Nassauvians are fortunate enough to possess private courts, which makes Tennis Parties frequent and pleasant forms of entertainment. Though there is not much variety in the rides about Nassau, the nature of the roads makes their surface wonderfully consistent and only rarely is a Bicycle ride impossible. And such moonlight cycling as may be enjoyed here is quite unique—an experience to envy, a memory to treasure as one of the pleasantest. Golf has of late come, seen, and conquered Nassau. Small but suitable links surround the cricket-ground at Fort Charlotte, and many men for whom cricket is too vigorous and tennis too warm have now found in golf a game after their own heart ; and not a few ladies are becoming devotees of the links.

Local predilection and the facilities afforded by the harbour and the chain of islets that form it, make aquatic entertainments very popular both among Nassauvians and their guests. Picnics to one of the adjacent cays, fishing parties, excursions after sharks, or to view the “sea-

gardens," and moonlight sails, are favourite forms of pleasure. Occasional regattas bring out the strong rivalry which always exists between captains and crews, and the good points of local vessels. Most of the out-islands send competitors, and interest is high in all the events.

In the Memoirs of Lieut. Bruce, previously referred to, the following incident is recorded; it will serve to show that even in 1742 the men of Nassau were sociably inclined. "A club had been instituted to meet once a week at a tavern, and at our third meeting, a dispute arose between me and Lieut. Stuart; and when His Excellency "(Govr. Tinker)" saw the dispute beginning to grow warm, he absented himself; on which, averse to any further altercation, I went home." * There is still a club in Nassau, a far-off descendant of the above; but it does not meet at a tavern; it is housed in convenient rooms near the Public Buildings. Nor must the quarrelsome character of its members be inferred from the above quotation. That disagreement ended next day in a fight on the beach, and the arrest of the two officers. But now "old times are changed, old manners gone."

The sources of public entertainment in Nassau are neither numerous nor varied. Only rarely do professionals of any sort visit the city, but Concerts, Soirées, etc., are frequently held in the different Church Halls.

* Memoirs of Peter Henry Bruce. London, 1782. Page 400.

No sketch of the social life of this would be even approximately complete without reference to the local love of dancing. The Bahamians are ardently devoted to Terpsichorean and every possible occasion is used as a pretext for a dance. These are not often large except such as are given at Government or the Hotels, but are always marked by a considerable zest and enjoyment.

The third of the social centres of Bahamian life—whose wide circles overlap and embrace the hours unclaimed by business—is formed by the ecclesiastical activities of the colony. Some functions entirely public, and others more restricted to their own adherents, are constantly being provided by the different religious denominations whose headquarters are in Nassau and in various forms of Church work make up the chief occupations of their leisure hours. On the out-islands nearly all social life radiates from the residencies and the parsonages.

It is inevitable that a colony where the social pyramid is so small, and the foundation so broad, should lack very markedly those social distinctions which frequently make life in other lands a mixture of far and near. No doubt this is mainly due to the close relationship—a factor of widespread influence—in Bahamian social life. During the last two centuries immigration has been infrequent and termarriage abundant, especially among the comparatively small number of white families. This is only to be expected in a small and important archipelago, never largely inhabited.

but these conditions of life are less observable in Nassau than on the other islands of the group.

Moreover, it is only ten years since this colony was brought into telegraphic communication with the outside world ; and before that time, often for long periods, the mail-steamer service was only monthly. Though, in many respects, the Bahamas may be regarded as a pleasant, willow-buried backwater of the stream of modern progress, it is certainly to its credit that it has escaped the stagnation of a swamp. Visitors who stay long enough in Nassau, and become acquainted with its life and with persons resident there will probably endorse this conclusion.

Intending visitors should, if possible, bring with them letters of introduction. Strangers have occasionally written, on their return home, of Bahamian exclusiveness and lack of sociability. This is rather unreasonable. Nassau cannot be expected to call indiscriminately upon the guests at its hotels ; but it may certainly be relied upon to show hospitality and attention to all who come accredited by mutual friends. Other introductions not being forthcoming, the Consuls of various countries will always do their duty with geniality and tact ; and the Ministers of all denominations are glad to do what they can for those who call upon them.

CHAPTER VII.

THE SOCIAL LIFE OF NASSAU.

(CONTINUED).

A little work, much rest, our share of sorrow—
Laugh, sing, and talk—all careless of the morrow !

Warm sun, clear skies, a land of living beauty—
Why should we fret ? Life is not all stern duty !

Chant of The Careless Sons.

THE population of the Bahamas numbers about fifty thousand—mostly coloured people. In Nassau they are two thirds of the inhabitants. The relationship of the races in this colony conforms to a sentiment that is neither—on the one hand—that of the Southern States, nor—on the other hand—quite that of the West Indies. It lacks the exclusiveness of the former and the equality of the latter ; and it has often been remarked that the average of life among the Bahamian coloured folk is higher than in either of those other regions.

Like their white neighbours they are the descendants of ancient immigrants, though, having been born and lived here all their lives they may in a certain sense, be called natives. Many of the early settlers of the Bahamas brought their slaves with them from Virginia, or the

Carolinas, or the southern islands ; hundreds have been rescued from African slave-ships by avenging men-o'-war ; some have immigrated here as servants, mechanics or seamen. And from the earliest days the true African strain has suffered admixture through inter-marriage and other causes, so that now the coloured community of the Bahamas presents a widely-graduated scale of hue and appearance, and a highly complex parentage.

Here, also, we find a social order—certain axioms concerning precedence. Not infrequently one's housemaid will thus announce different visitors. "A white woman," or "A coloured person," or "A black lady to see you Ma'rm !"—as the case may require. It matters not that the first may come to the front door with a card-case, and the last to the back-door with oranges for sale ; that is the usual formula and represents the prevailing sentiment on this subject from the pure Afro-Indian point of view. Certain verbal transpositions are possible—it may be noticed—in the above expressions, and the fact that they would probably not be similarly made by those denominated, may help to an understanding of the social order.

It is a pleasure to record the fact that the march of modern progress and the increase of educational facilities have made a decided mark upon Bahamian people of colour. They number in their ranks many estimable persons of decided intelligence, who contribute not a little to the stability and interest of Bahamian life. The growth of refinement and self-respect has been considerable during recent years. Solid business

qualities have given many of them an assured position in the community, and as citizens, whether in public or private life, they are persons of influence in the community, pleasant to meet as acquaintances or in a business capacity. Hardly any church-committee is without its one or two coloured members, whose judgment is often found of value, and in the House of Assembly as well as on other public boards there are generally to be found, from time to time, worthy representatives of the larger portion of the population.

The suburbs of Nassau, to the south and east, and the houses lying to the west of the city, are occupied almost exclusively by a coloured population, including a number of native-born Africans, chiefly from the West Coast, whose attempts to express themselves in English are always quaint and often unintelligible, and who retain many of the customs of their early life. It is so long since a cargo of slaves was captured and brought to Nassau, that most of the old Africans now living can hardly remember their native land, as none have lately arrived thence to revive old recollections, and most of them were exported when quite young. Many were born here in slavery; and, under, the apprentice system, a large number became servants to the planters and others; but of these early days they have only a dim receding memory. Still, as who should say "lest we forget"! they indulge occasionally in weird dances and uncouth customs, and when two of a tribe meet they converse with great unction, talking "our country"—as they say—for hours.

It was the former advent of these Africans which tended to keep the social life of the coloured people picturesque and interesting, and—it must be said—but crudely civilized. Their superstitions, obeahism, and strange religious ideas—though by no means extinct—are being exchanged for more sophisticated and, sometimes, less sincere views on these matters. The frank acceptance of their position, combined with not a little affection and respect for their employers, is passing away as the grateful transports of Emancipation Day are fading from memory. The “little knowledge” which is said to be a “dangerous thing” is being disseminated by the ubiquitous schoolmaster; and ambitions which—with some exceptions—neither temperament nor training are adequate to maintain, are begetting a certain objection to obedience which owes its indolence, in great measure, to climatic influences.

To be (with as little trouble as possible) a person of consequence—an officer of a Lodge, in a Church, or on a vessel, is the Afro-Indian's dearest wish; in a word, to be “boss” somewhere! And who will deny—in view of this fact—the great doctrine, the Brotherhood of Man? But notwithstanding this, their large social capacities give a remarkable cohesion and geniality to their intercourse. Societies, Orders, and Brotherhoods abound, each abundantly officered, and none minimising his position. Few come to a meeting punctually, but no one forgets his uniform! With the smiling carelessness, the easy inconsequence, and the love of the spectacular which characterise the “junior

race " they live and laugh, work and play together—amusing or annoying by turns, but always interesting to the unprejudiced eye and the sympathetic ear.

Ample opportunity is provided for the expression of the processional instinct—so deeply rooted in the nature of the coloured folk, and so variously expressed, from the bland, expansive dignity of the chief officers to the rhythmic tripping of the youngest neophyte. At certain periods the Lodge "turns out" and probably goes to worship at some Church; but the march to and from the sacred edifice in "full regalia," headed, if possible, by a band, is not simply the means to the end; to most it is the end—the "turn out." The object of many of these Orders is to help their members when sick, and to bury them decently. Everybody tries to belong to a Burial Society, partly because of its pecuniary advantages, no doubt; but the fact that all the members must march out to every funeral, or be fined, is counted no hardship. On the contrary, it is this that serves to show the Afro-Indian's affinity with the *Duke of Plaza-Toro (Limited)*, that memorable grandee in the *Gondoliers*, who gravely remarks, "We like an interment!"

Weddings, wherever possible, are made occasions of great display: carriages *and* pairs of horses, groomsmen and bridesmaids galore, with a reception and dance to follow, generally held at the bridegroom's. It hardly needs to be said that dancing is, *par excellence*, the pastime of the coloured people. While some display

considerable grace, energy, as a rule, triumphs over elegance. An accordion, a triangle, and tambourines (made of sheep-skin stretched over wooden hoops) form the usual orchestra ; though a violin, guitar, or banjo may occasionally be used. The ordinary dances, with certain local modifications, are indulged in ; some are of Spanish origin, and others, on different islands, contain more than a suggestion of native African evolutions. But in this, as in most social affairs, the metropolis is more and more setting its mark upon out-island life.

The fete-day of the coloured folk is the First of August. This is celebrated throughout the colony in honour of Emancipation Day, 1834, though generally no reference is made to the subject. Indeed it is more than likely that many of the younger generation have no idea of the real cause of the festivities. Processions, dances, and entertainments of various sorts are held and sometimes the proceedings are kept up for nearly a week. Christmas Day, also, and the week following is made the occasion of much noisy jollity. Every Fifth of November the doings of Guy Fawkes are ardently celebrated, though probably not a little uncertainty surrounds both the identity and the exploits of that gentleman ; in fact, his effigy is often burnt on New Year's Eve.

The houses of the coloured people vary in size and material from pretentious stone buildings to simple huts of palmetto thatch. For the more part they are small wooden structures, generally unpainted and delapidated—sure

signs of "hard times" or want of thrift, neither of which is unknown in the Bahamas. Each house has its "yard"; many of them are large, planted with fruit-trees and gay with flowers; but only rarely do they display much persistent or intelligent cultivation. The low, wide valley lying behind the city and extending to the Baillou Hills, is damp and fertile; the very rock is kindly, and the soil produces fair crops with but little effort. Nearly everything that is grown is sold in pennyworth's from door to door, or at stalls in the streets. Only a few raise enough oranges or other fruits to sell to some merchant for shipping. Many of the men go to sea, mostly on sponging or turtling voyages; others are agriculturists. A large number of the women are hired as cooks or washerwomen, or are engaged in other forms of domestic service.

Their home-life, on the whole, is happy; certainly it is uneventful. It is not of a high order—this, indeed, cannot be expected; but the tone is undoubtedly being raised by various agencies. Chief amongst these must be mentioned the Churches, which fill a large place in the coloured people's lives. Wherever their love of singing, their susceptibility to the spectacular, and their emotional nature is appealed to, there will they gather: and the majority will be found where least is required in the way of renunciation and reflection. But the refining and elevating influences of the last fifty years have wrought far-reaching changes in their tastes and conduct.

Being by nature more indolent than many of his compatriots, the Afro-Indian seldom becomes

a man of means ; though Grant's Town has produced two or three misers, who were also money-lenders to their impecunious neighbours ; and the descendants of a certain West African tribe—whose name I have not been able to discover—frequently display considerable business ability of the small-shopkeeper order, and occasionally become possessed of some property. But this cannot be said of the bulk of the “ junior race.” Rarely ambitious—or if ambitious, rarely persevering—they know but little of anxiety ; the future is left, pretty much, to take care of itself ; food and raiment and a dwelling for to-day, with vigorous health and occasional bursts of enjoyment, help to make life tolerable : while large intervals of leisure—enforced by weather or flagrantly stolen overmastering inclination—give opportunity for such loafing and “ discoursing,” with many big words, as delights the Afro-Indian soul.

CHAPTER VIII.

BAHAMIAN FOLKLORE.

Hark ! the Sea is speaking, and the Stars
Tell the listening worldings of their wars !
See the Spirits flitting through the night ;
Hear the wail of many a luckless Wight !

Bahamian Ballads and Rhymes.

IT is inevitable that the expatriated Africans and their numerous descendants, who form so large a proportion of the inhabitants of the Bahamas, should display many of the mental and social characteristics of their ancestry and fatherland. Hence there are found in these islands not a few traces of the weird folklore of the "dark continent," altered more or less by the present life and surroundings of the Afro-Indian. Their "ole stories" and "antums" are interesting both from an ethnological and artistic point of view, and generally find a large place in the reminiscences of those who spent some time in the colony. But they need to be heard in their natural setting to be thoroughly appreciated. For it would indeed be a bold and vivid fancy that would attempt to picture and to place in proper circumstance the quaint singers and story-tellers of these Isles of June. Sitting under one's own metaphorical vine and fig tree in a semi-detached villa in England or America,

it is difficult to realize the free and careless life of the Bahamian as he lives and laughs beneath the actual vine and fig tree of his southern home.

For many years strangers have been accustomed to attend the evening services of what is usually called the "Shouter" Church in Grant's Town, partly with the view of hearing "an-tums" sung. But however interesting this may be, to certain persons, as a vigorous novelty in religious worship, it is certainly not a satisfactory way to become acquainted with the folklore songs of the Bahamas. Very often such a service becomes an artificial and irreligious "show," got up chiefly to make money, though held in what is—ostensibly—a place of worship. It is not at all a fair type of the sincere but unsophisticated worship of the Afro-Indian when he is natural and unobserved. In fact, it must be said, that, only one who has lived in the colony some years, and been to several islands, or a visitor who comes frequently and stays long, can ever hope to become at all intimately or satisfactorily acquainted with Bahamian folklore. And, even then, great tact and patience and not a little sympathy are necessary.

After a day's work in the field, out of the glory of a crimson sunset, the father and a boy or two come sailing home with a boat load of cassava, sugar cane, sweet potatoes, and firewood. Or a more tedious walk may take the place of the pleasant sail. Then "all han's" set to work to prepare supper. Guinea corn,

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hominy, cassava bread, bananas, fish—if he is in luck—baked sweet potatoes, or—O joy!—a bit of fat pork may contribute to the meal.

Then, in the growing splendour of the moonlight, talk, infinite talk, occupies the elder folk, and unbounded play, with stories and songs, engages the attention of the children. Neighbours gather round the door, sit on the steps, or squat under the orange trees, and “discourse” of ships and wrecks, of mighty hauls of fish, of adventures grim or comic, of the war, of the cholera, and the '66 gale. Scenes like this are familiar to all who have spent some time among these interesting people. On any summer night such gatherings may be seen. Here and there are groups of little urchins, in shirts of shameless brevity, gathered about the door or squatting by the wall of some hut “talkin’ ole stories.” And above the hum of countless insects and the deeper voices of the older folk, one is heard saying, in a low, earnest tone :

“Once it was a time, an’ a very good time ;
De monkey chew tobacco an’ e’ spet white lime !”

This is the usual prelude, then follows the story.

Here is a specimen one, reproduced as nearly as possible in print :

“B’ BARRACOUTA * AN’ B’ MAN.”

“Once it vwas a man ; ’e had a fiel’ ’pon a differen’ part o’ de shore. Dis day ’e did vwan’

* Barracouta is an eel-like fish, of considerable size, with numerous strong sharp teeth—quiet when unmolested, but very savage if attacked.

to go to his fiel'. 'E meet one shark. 'E say to de shark, 'Please carry me 'cross to my fiel'. B' Shark say, 'All right!' an' e' carry 'im cross. Vw'en 'e get 'cross 'e give b' Shark a good cut. B' Shark say, 'All right!'

"'E come out again from 'is fiel'; e' meet b' Shark again. 'E say, 'b' Shark please carry me 'cross once mo'. B' Shark, say, 'All right!' an' b' Shark carry 'im 'cross again, an' 'e give b' Shark 'nurrer (another) heavy cut. B' Shark say, 'All right!'

"Nex' day de man did vwan' go 'cross again. 'E say, 'b' Shark, please carry me 'cross to dat shore.' E' say, 'I'll give you one fortun'!' B' Shark carry 'im agen, an' 'e give b' Shark such a cut, till b' Shark had to lay awake till 'e come out agen.

"Sun vwas nearly down vw'en de man come out. 'E say 'b' Shark, please carry me 'cross again.' 'E say, 'I'll pay you vw'en I get 'cross.' B' Shark say, 'Get on my back!'" De firs' fish b' Shark meet vwas a corb (cub, species of shark). B' Shark say, 'b' Corb, you do man good an' man do you harm.' E' say, 'Vw'at you must' do ter 'im? B' Corb say, 'Cut 'im in two!' Next vwas a porpy (porpoise). E' says, 'b' Porpy, you do man good an' man do you harm. Vw'at you mus' do ter 'im?' B' Porpy say, 'Leave it to Gawd.' De nex' was a barracouta. 'E say, 'b' Barracouta you do man good an' man do you harm. Vw'at you mus' do ter 'im? B' Barracouta say, 'Cut 'im eyes out!'

"B' Shark see b' Rabby (rabbit) on de rocks. 'E say, 'b' Rabby, you do man good an' man do you harm. Vw'at you mus' do ter 'im? B' Rabby, say, 'Come in little bit funder. I ain't hear you.' (B' Rabby vwan to save de man.) 'E come in. 'E say, 'b' Rabby, you do man good an' man do you harm. Vw'at you mus' do ter 'im?' B' Rabby say, 'Come in little bit funder. Still I ain't hear you.' 'B' Shark come in little bit funder. 'E say, 'I cahn come no funder, else I get 'shore.' Den b' Shark ask 'im again, b' Rabby say, 'Vw'y, let 'im jump 'shore!' Befo' de shark could turn an' go, de man petch (pitch—that is, jump) on ter de rocks, an' b' Shark swim away cryin'!"

It is difficult to account for the prefix printed "B." The sound it stands for can be best represented thus, but as heard, it is much more euphonious and descriptive than the bare pronunciation of the letter. It must not be confounded with the attempt to pronounce "the" on the part of a Negro who cannot manage his "th." That unmistakably resolves itself into "de." This is quite a different matter. Among the Negroes of the Southern States, Joel Chandler Harris ("Uncle Remus") describes the sound as "brer," in his "brer rabbit" for example. But the Bahamian Negro, as a rule, speaks more thickly and abruptly, with less use of tongue and teeth and more play of lips.

As to the meaning of the expression, it may be said to stand as a distinguishing adjective, quite unnecessary, but giving a quaint force to the recital and a feeling of personal acquaint-

tance, even of kinship, with the characters so labelled. In a colony of small and widely scattered islands where all are related, terms of relationship play a large part in ordinary conversation. Almost everyone on every settlement is "family" to everyone else, and "buller" (brother) is a term of almost infinite occurrence used to cover many different degrees of relationship. Add to this the fact that "brother" as an official title is largely used. The Afro-Indian has a passion for societies and orders—burial, friendly, temperance, and others—and nearly all who can afford the small subscription become members of various lodges, entitled to wear a gorgeous bib or a resplendent apron, and ostentatiously called "buller" by all his fellow members.

Living a life of almost entire seclusion from the world as the Bahamian does, and in close and constant intercourse with nature, birds, trees, ships, fishes, and even the sea become, in a sense, personified, and are described by personal pronouns, generally the feminine. "She" is a standard word of great force and usefulness in local parlance. And thus, by an easy and natural process, the animal heroes of the children's tales become familiar characters, terrible or gentle according to their nature, but all so well known as to be called "b' Shark. B' Rabbit, b' Goat, or b' Trasher"*—veritable play-brothers of their young imagination.

Some of these stories bear a remarkable resemblance to the fairy tales of one's childhood.

* "Thrasher," the Bahamian Thrush.

"B' Jack an' b' Snake" is surely a Bahamian version of "Jack the Giant Killer." "B' Jack" is a hero who accomplishes great feats against a hostile snake and pestilential rice birds, and receives as his reward the hand of the queen's daughter in marriage. Others evidently incorporate African legends and customs. These are told most effectively by old slaves, in wildly dramatic tones and almost unintelligible English. Some of the tales may possibly be founded on fact.

The source of many of them is obscure but certainly ancient. One tale, concerning "De Big Worrum" * is a version of an old African story, variants of which are given by Endemann, and by Theal in his *Kaffre Folk-Lore*. And the story of "B' Rabby, b' Bouki, an' b' Cow" has been found by Boas among the folklore tales of the Vancouver Island Indians, and is, under various forms, even more widely distributed. "B' Bouki" is probably a corrupt form of the French "le bouc." The same form is found in the folklore of Louisiana. The word has been adopted in the Bahamas as a proper name without any knowledge of its original meaning.

Several tales embody the idea that certain animals, in order to obtain food, entice other animals to their destruction. Most negro races have stories of this kind, and examples may be found in *Æsop*. "B' Little Clod an' b' Big Clod" is obviously a Bahamian version of Hans Andersen's "Little Claus and Big Claus;" and some of the stories contain more than a sugges-

* "Worm."

tion of our good friend Grimm. But whatever may be their real source, however uncertain their genesis, they undoubtedly have a large place in the mental furniture of the Afro-Indian, whose love of the picturesque is an entirely childlike and interesting feature of his character.

All who have spent some time in the West Indies know the religious songs locally called "Antums." If the sailor's story concerning the difference between a hymn and an anthem may be accepted as an adequate description, these Bahamian songs can certainly claim the latter title; for their most astonishing characteristic is the endless combinations of verse and chorus, and the countless changes and repetitions through which they wind to a long-drawn-out conclusion.

I have spoken of them as "productions" but this seems hardly the happiest word to use. They are in no sense artificial things turned out to pattern. Each "antum" is a growth—a veritable Jonah's gourd of erratic verse, springing up—very frequently—and perishing in a night. When you have heard it once you may be pretty sure you will not hear it again in quite the same form. It is a vocal and metrical organism which "never continueth in one stay." And this constitutes the "antum's" best claim to be considered folklore. They contain the essence of the grotesque and childish musings of the Afro-Indian mind upon the mysteries of religion and the more remarkable incidents and accompaniments of the Divine Revelation.

On the islands where the stereotyping influences of modern civilization are but lightly felt, these religious songs are the chief form of vocal music, as the playing of the home-made drum (an adapted form of the tom-tom) is of instrumental. In many parts of The Bahamas hymns learned at the different mission churches have done much to lessen the use of the "antum." But upon all occasions when feeling rises high, bursting the bonds of self-consciousness and throwing off the chilling restraint of strangers' company, some one starts an "antum," which is taken up on all sides and sung with immense heartiness and simply wonderful combinations of harmony—

" You see my fader ? Oh, yes !
 Tell 'im for me ! Oh yes !
 I'll ride my horse on de battle fiel'—
 I'se gwine to go to heaven in de mawnin' !

CHORUS.

Ride on, Jesus ! Ride on, Jesus !
 Ride on, conquering Jesus !
 I'se gwine to go to heaven in de mawnin' ?"

This is a fair sample both of the spirit and style of these folklore songs.

It is remarkable that none of the stories have religious subjects, while none of the songs are on secular themes. None of the hurricanes, wrecks, earthquake shocks, or other tragic occurrences are commemorated in verse. These are all spoken of as matters of fact, however embellished or exaggerated : they do not seem to have stirred the imagination of the people. Even the glories of Emancipation Day remain unsung. All the folk-lore songs that I have heard are of a religious character.

The fact that the Afro-Indian has a persistent tendency to religious emotionalism is as indisputable as it is insignificant. It is impossible to say how many generations must elapse before the strange superstitions and weird fancies, that alternately leave one sad or smiling, shall have vanished from the minds of the men and women of the "Junior Race."

In these songs may be discovered an interest deeper than a merely ethnological or literary one. They help to an understanding of the crude religious ideas and highly emotional character of the Afro-Indian, and to a more intelligent sympathy with his fitful but well-meant attempts to be good.

Often when the labour of the day is done, or sailing over the brilliant phosphorescent sea on a calm, moon-lit night, these weird and touching melodies are heard. But it is in moments of sorrow or religious exaltation that they are sung most effectively.

The following is a favourite in certain places; for, like dialects or intonations, many of these "antums" are localised to a considerable extent.

" Brudder, fo' you soul's sake,
Come out o' de wilderness,
Come out o' de wilderness,
Come out o' de wilderness,
Brudder, fo' you soul's sake,
Come out o' de wilderness,
Talkin' about de Lawd."

CHORUS.

" Been a long time talkin' about de Lawd."

(Repeated four Times.)

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Any number of verses may be formed by putting "mother," "sister," etc., in place of "brother"; and so the song goes on till a longer pause than usual gives some else a chance to start another.

Certain stock verses occur in different "antums." Here is one that may be heard in various contexts to many different tunes :

"De talles' tree in Paradise—
I'm on mi' jerney 'ome !
De Christian call it de tree ob life—
I'm on mi' jerney 'ome !"

The following is a favourite :

"De win' blo' eas' an' de win' blo' wes,
It blo' like Jedgemen' Day ;"

.. CHORUS.

"O, sinners, you better pray,
Do, Lawd, remember me !
Do, Lawd, remember me !
Do, Lawd, remember me !"

Here are two more verses, also frequently found in other contexts :

"I spoke to Peter on the sea,
'E lef' is net an' follow me "

(CHORUS.)

"Come along, Mosis, don' git doubt !
If you git doubt you will be loss."

(CHORUS.)

Words, melody and voices combine to produce an effect of indescribable pathos in the chorus, which is repeated again and again with increasing emotion.

The phonetic spelling of these verses must not be taken as any mark of disrespect either to

the words or singers. It is an inadequate but helpful attempt to add vividness to the rendering, to give as nearly as possible the sound of the words as sung.

Octave Thanet says of the songs : " They all have the same characteristics, an erratic melody, a formless yet sometimes brilliant imagination, pervading melancholy, and no trace of what we call sense."

Whether the pessimistic predictions of Trollope and Froude of Negro supremacy and return to African barbarism will be fulfilled in the Bahamas one cannot say. But the comparatively poorer soil of these islands makes hard work a necessity for those who wish to live and prosper. And other influences are steadily at work, tending, as the years go by, not only to the maintenance but also to the advancement of the present state of life. The simple, Old-World, semi-civilized life is fast passing away. The quaint, unsophisticated ideas, the childish superstitions, the legends, the traditions, and the songs are falling out of the quickening race for life. No doubt the fittest will survive, but it will not be the most picturesque. And this, though sad, is satisfactory.

CHAPTER IX.

RELIGION, PHILANTHROPY, AND EDUCATION.

"Domine Deus Eterene et Omnipotens, sacro Tuo verbo cœlum, et terram, et mare creasti ; benedicatur et glorificetur nomen Tuum, laudetur Tua Majestas, quæ dignata est per humilem servum Tuum, ut Ejus sacrum nomen agnoscatur et prædicatur in hac alterâ mundi parte."—*Columbus' Prayer on landing in the Bahamas.*

ACCORDING to the English custom of early colonising days it is probable that Chaplains as well as Governors were appointed to this colony from time to time, and some may have come out and worked in Nassau for long or short periods. But the first mention of one is contained in an appeal of the inhabitants to the authorities in England against the tyranny of their Governor, Elias Hasket, in 1701. This interesting document is preserved in the British Museum. Amongst other charges is mentioned the grievance of the clergyman : "whom the Governor hath proceeded to vilifie and defame, though a man of worth, threatening him with the whip throughout the town, so that by these means the Gospel is no more preached here, nor

any church service held for months past.”* As may be imagined religion was at a discount in those days. After this, in fact, it was not until 1731 that a S.P.G. missionary—the Rev. Mr. Guy from Charleston, S.C.—came to Nassau on a pastoral visit, and found a small wooden church standing where Christ Church now is.

“In consequence of the representations of Mr. Guy, the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel, decided, with the authority of the Archbishop of Canterbury, to plant a permanent mission in the Bahamas, of which, at that time, only New Providence, Harbour Island, and Eleuthera were inhabited, and the Rev. Wm. Smith was sent from England as their missionary.”† The rector's stipend was partly paid by the local Government. In 1754 a larger and better church was built on the site of the first one. A missionary was placed at Harbour Island in 1769, and in the following year an Act of the House of Assembly was passed for creating “Parishes within the Bahama Islands.” When the American colonies achieved their independence in 1782 the loyalists who emigrated thence to the Bahamas, being all Church-and-State men, greatly strengthened the Established Church, and new parishes were formed at Exuma, Long Island, and the Caicos Islands. Others quickly followed, but clergymen were not found to take charge of them, and in 1806 the S.P.G. was compelled to withdraw its support. In 1824 the Diocese of Jamaica was created and included the Bahamas,

* Wakefield's First Hundred Years of the Church of England in the Bahamas, p. 3.

† Wakefield's First Hundred Years, etc. p. 8.

which, in 1844, was constituted an Archdeaconry. Eleven years afterwards the S.P.G. again took up work here. The See of Nassau was created in 1861, and the Church was disestablished and disendowed in 1869.

During the last thirty years the Anglican Mission has developed as widely as the limited extent and resources of the colony have permitted. It is better equipped and more efficiently worked now than at any time during its history. There are over twenty clergymen working in the different parishes which include all the inhabited islands of the group and the Turks and Caicos Islands, which are under the Government of Jamaica. All the principal settlements have their church, and nearly all the hamlets; and the presence of the clergyman—who is often doctor as well as priest on many out-islands—is a potent and far-reaching influence on the side of righteousness and refinement. The work is supported mainly by grants and contributions from England. Nassau is divided into three parishes, the principal churches of which have already been mentioned. The Bishop of Nassau, the Right Rev. H. N. Churton D.D., resides at Addington House, Shirley Street.

In 1796 a Methodist chapel was built in the Western district of Nassau by a band of slaves under the leadership of a godly negro named Joseph Paul. The building was afterwards used as an Anglican chapel-of-ease, but in 1845 it again became Methodist property. It is now used as a Mission Hall. Certain preachers who came from Carolina about this time fell into con-

dict with the colonial authorities, were obliged to return to America, and their efforts came to nought. Application for help was then made to the Rev. Dr. Coke, the founder and patron of Methodist Missions, but for want of men the pressing call was declined. Three years later, however, Dr. Coke stated to the Methodist Conference that "Mr. Turton, who has introduced the Gospel into St. Bartholomew, has been appointed to Providence Island, to which we have had strong and repeated invitations." *

The Rev. Wm. Turton landed at Nassau on October 22nd, 1800, and with his arrival began the direct association of the Methodist Church in the Bahamas with the Wesleyan Missionary Society and the English Conference—an association which still continues. Mr. Turton came with a letter of introduction to the Hon. Thomas Forbes, who presented him to Governor Dowdeswell. He took the oaths of allegiance and supremacy—which were required of Dissenters in those days—and procured the necessary licence to preach to slaves. This he did constantly both in the open air and in the house of Anthony Wallace, a free negro, until a considerable congregation was gathered. "That there was great need for an aggressive evangelism is evident from the fact that the commonest rules of morality and decency were utterly disregarded by a large portion of the community. More than half the population were slaves, to whom the missionary was drawn both by considerations of humanity and of Christian zeal ; his attempts to

* Lester's In Sunny Isles.

impart religious instruction were, however, viewed by many with distrust and disapproval. But in course of time Mr. Turton's aims and methods came to be better understood and appreciated by the inhabitants of Nassau; opposition subsided, and some who had been enemies were changed into friends by his kindly manner and conciliatory spirit."*

In 1802 a place of worship was built in the Eastern district of Nassau, and two years later another missionary arrived. Early in 1805 the mission was extended to Harbour Island, and afterwards to Eleuthera, at each of which places, as in Nassau, a day school was opened. A church was built in the Western part of Nassau in 1812, and on the day of the Battle of Waterloo a missionary sailed for Abaco. Long Island and Inagua were visited soon after, and gradually the work grew, until the emancipation year opened a still wider sphere of usefulness. Writing of this time the late Archdeacon of the Bahamas says: "The most cursory perusal of the history of the Church during this period, convinces one that had it not been for the ministrations of Nonconformists almost the entire colony beyond Nassau would have been wrapped in heathen darkness, superstition, and savagery."† There are at present ten Methodist Ministers working in various parts of the colony and in Key West, Fla., and thirty places of worship, four of which are in New Providence. The position of the Methodist Church to-day is one of

* Lester's *In Sunny Isles*, p. 18.

† Wakefield's *First Hundred Years*, etc., p. 19.

considerable influence, both in Nassau and on the principal out-islands. The General Superintendent of the Mission is the Rev. F. W. Gos-tick. Trinity Parsonage, Nassau.

Many of the earliest settlers of the Bahamas were Scots, or American colonists of Scottish decent ; and it was therefore only natural that a Presbyterian Church should be established in Nassau quite early in the century. The first minister was the Rev. John Rae, M.A. The nationality of the first trustees is sufficiently evident from their names—Michael Malcolm, William Kerr, James Wood, Neil McQueen and Walter Finlay ; their descendants and those of slaves are to be found all over the colony, in addition to many other bearers of distinctly northern patronymics. The foundation stone of the Church was laid on 7th August, 1810, with much ceremony, the Governor and chief officials being present, and Masonic rites forming an important part of the proceedings. St. Andrew's Church, as representing the national religion of Scotland, was for many years supported by the Government ; but the Presbyterians—at no small loss to themselves—joined with the Methodist and Baptists in the disendowment movement of 1868 which freed all of the religious bodies represented in the Bahamas alike from State control and support. Presbyterianism in Nassau was formerly under the jurisdiction of the Edinburgh Presbytery, but it has been transferred of late to the Presbytery of Belfast. A mission is conducted by members of the church in a neat hall in Delancy Town, known, from its situation, as the "Quarry Mission."

It was founded by a devoted American lady while on a visit to Nassau ten years ago, and the hall was opened in 1893, since which time it has been a centre of valuable Christian work. St. Andrew's Church, or—as is it more familiarly called—"the Kirk," has had but few ministers during its life; they have usually been men of ability and force who have held the pastorate for lengthened periods, and the church has been for many years a prominent feature of the religious life of Nassau. The present pastor is the Rev. R. T. Bailey, M.A., The Manse, Nassau.

The first "Native Baptist" church in Nassau was established in 1801 through the instrumentality of some coloured men from St. Augustine, Fla., who built a place of worship near where the present Bethel Church now stands on the hill overlooking Delancy Town. This church, with a branch at Fox Hill, is self-supporting; the pastor is the Rev. James Sweeting. By far the larger section of the Native Baptists is that whose principal place of worship is St. John's Church, Delancy Town. This is the outcome of the work begun by a coloured man named Spence who built two small chapels near Fort Fincastle soon after the American War of 1812. There are forty-two affiliated churches scattered all over the colony, each independent, but recognising the central authority of the Nassau pastor, the Rev. J. W. Roberts. They are not connected with any Missionary Society.

The work of the English Baptist Missionary Society in the Bahamas began in 1833 with the

arrival of the Rev. John Burton, who endeavoured to introduce better discipline amongst the Native Baptist churches. He visited many of the islands and established Mission Stations where no religious instruction had previously been given. Thirteen other missionaries were sent out from time to time, and under the able and devoted Rev. Henry Capern most of the colony was evangelized, churches were built, and several schools opened, the cost of the work being met by grants from England. Zion Church, Nassau, is the headquarters of the mission, and is a leading centre of religious activity amongst the coloured community of the city. The General Superintendent of the work is the Rev. Charles A. Dann, the Nassau pastor, who resides in East Street.

The Bahamas Baptist Union embodies a secession from the parent church which took place in 1892. The Nassau congregation worships in a neat stone chapel in Parliament Street, next door to which is the residence of the Rev. Daniel Wilshire, for many years connected with the Baptist Missionary Society in the Bahamas and now the Superintendent of the churches forming the Union, which are found at Fox Hill and on some half-dozen of the out-islands.

The Roman Catholic Church was established in Nassau in 1885 mainly through the exertions of the Rev. C. G. O'Keefe, who was wintering here, and Surgeon Major Adye-Curran, the medical officer of the garrison at that time. Land was purchased and a church built, which was opened two years later by the Archbishop

of New York, to which diocese the Bahamas had been transferred from that of South Carolina, Extensive and valuable property has gradually been acquired, and the work has steadily grown from its inception. Sisters of Charity, from time to time during the last ten years, have been added to the Staff, and in 1891 the Benedictine Fathers of St. John's Abbey, Minnesota, took charge of the Mission through one of their number, the Rev. Father Chrysostom Schreiner, who is at present the priest in charge ; he resides at the Priory, West Hill Street.

Various charities and philanthropic societies help to lessen ignorance, want, and suffering both in the capital and in other parts of the colony. Chief amongst these must be mentioned the local auxiliary of the *British and Foreign Bible Society*. Its affairs are managed by a committee of representative ministers and laymen. It holds an annual meeting, and maintains a Depository at the two principal book stores in the city. The present secretary is the Rev. Daniel Wilshere. *Aaron Dixon's Charity* has provided during nearly ninety years for the education of certain fatherless children. This generous Scotchman made the Vestry of Christ Church his executors, and by it the provisions of the trust are carried out. *St. Andrew's Society* is a benevolent institution founded in 1798 to afford relief to persons in distress, irrespective of nationality or creed. A committee of charity, annually appointed, dispenses the alms of the society. *The Kirkwood Trust*—Under the will of the late Hon. Dr. Kirkwood financial relief is afforded to certain female annuitants who are of

the class described in the will. There are also two *Masonic Lodges* in Nassau, under the constitution of the United Grand Lodge of England and the Grand Lodge of Scotland, respectively ; four *Odd Fellows Lodges* ; several *Temperance* organizations ; and a number of *Friendly Societies*.

A system of free and compulsory education, under the control of a Board annually appointed by the Governor, obtains throughout the Bahamas. Nearly every settlement has its school-house and Government schoolmaster. At some of the smaller settlements grant-in-aid schools are maintained. All are under the supervision of an able and experienced Inspector. At Nassau and Harbour Island there are separate girls' schools, but generally the sexes are taught in the one building and there is no distinction made as to colour, the schools being conducted as nearly as possible on the same lines as those of the British and Foreign School Society. The qualifications of the teachers and the results produced are gradually improving ; but the comparatively large number of small schools, and consequently small salaries, the isolation and lack of intelligent supervision of many of the teachers, and the long distances and rough roads—often rendered impassable by rain—which many of the pupils have to travel, are unavoidable hindrances. The age-limit of compulsory attendance has lately been raised by the Legislature from twelve to thirteen years. A total of forty-three schools (including grant-in-aid) having nearly six thousand pupils' names on the Registers, who are instructed by a staff of

one hundred and sixty teachers and monitors, is under the care of the Board. Including all items of expenditure "public education cost the colony during the year 1900 at the average rate of £88 17s. 9d. for each school, 12s. $\frac{1}{4}$ d. for each name on the registers, or £1 1s. 5d. for each child in average attendance. On comparing these figures with the expenditure *per capita* for education in England and Wales and in other parts of the Empire, it will be found that they indicate a degree of economy which only necessity can justify." *

Higher education in the Bahamas is provided mainly by schools under the patronage of the various churches. The Nassau Grammar School, held in the Church Hall, was founded by Bishop Venables in 1864; to this corresponds St. Hilda's High School for girls, begun in 1886. Queen's College, established in 1891, has three departments, the Boys' and Girls' conducted in Victoria Hall, and the Kindergarten in the schoolroom of Trinity Church. The Young Ladies' High School is held in St. Andrew's Hall. St. Francis Xavier's Academy in West Hill Street is conducted by the Sisters of Charity; and in other ways the Roman Catholic Church has displayed great educational activity. There are several Anglican day schools both in Nassau and in other parishes, and the Woodcock School is endowed and otherwise aided to provide free education for the children of Bain's Town.

* Board of Education Annual Report 1898—p. 2.

CHAPTER X.

CLIMATE AND WEATHER: NASSAU AS A HEALTH RESORT.

HERE shines the genial and lusty sun,
His splendour tempered by the ocean wind,
And soon the world-worn traveller shall find
His bitter conflict with disease is won.

Songs of Summerland.

“Tuvieron la mar como el rio de Sevilla ; gracias á Dios,
dice el Almirante : los aires mui dulces como en Abril en
Sevilla.”

Diario del Almirante.

THE desirability of life is often said to depend upon *climate* and the *affections*. Whatever truth the epigram contains goes to show the value of the Bahamas as a Winter resort. The visitor to these shores finds the former arranged for him to perfection and has only the latter to attend to himself—a lessening of labour quite delightful to the overworked and healthful to the invalid.

The fact of its being an island gives Nassau an initial advantage over continental cities. All who desire the benefits of sea-air without the

necessary limitations and discomforts of an ocean voyage find their wished-for haven on an island. Here the air is of a more equable temperature and the climate is less liable to fluctuations. Moreover, the very limitations of island-life incline the casual visitor to take a deeper interest in it. The unfamiliar surroundings, the new features of soil and landscape, air and ocean, the novelty of its affairs—social, commercial, political—form a subject for observation and inquiry which does not deter by reason of its size and complexity, as is generally the case with a continental city. One can get to know very much about an island in a month or two; hence more thoroughness in the pursuit and greater satisfaction in the acquirement of information is the result. The mind thus constantly and pleasantly employed the body reaps the benefit.

Nassau is so situated as to be an almost—ideal health resort. It is near to the continent and has recently been made quite easy of access from thence; yet it is not subject to its fierce winds and other treacherous climatic changes. The genial influence of the Gulf Stream, flowing steadily between Florida and the Bahamas, insures to it a splendid equability of temperature. As one who knows his subject well has said: "During the winter solstice the Bahamas are infinitely to be preferred to the neighbouring health-resorts of Florida, where a weeping sun and a capricious temperature often lead the invalid to curse the day that ever he turned toward the flowery peninsula."* And Nassau,

* Benjamin's Atlantic Islands, p. 258.

while lying on the borders of the Tropics, is well within the Temperate Zone; and enjoys the shelter of the out-lying islands in such a way as saves it from the fierce onset of the ocean winds. These advantages of situation render Nassau, as compared with the West Indian islands proper, quite unrivalled. Sir J. Clark, a distinguished physician, in comparing its climate with that of Barbadoes—for example—remarks: “The winter of Nassau is nearly 6 deg., and the spring 2 deg. colder, than the same seasons in Barbadoes; while the summer of the former is 2 deg. warmer than that of the latter, the autumn temperature at both places being about the same.”*

The following table shows the average summer and winter temperature of Nassau as compared with two northern cities and some other health-resorts.

PLACES.	WINTER.	SUMMER.	DIFFERENCE BETWEEN SUMMER AND WINTER.
Halifax, N. S.	21.00	61.00	40.00
New York	30.12	70.93	40.81
Nassau.	70.67	86.00	15.33
Funchal.	63.50	71.60	8.10
Nice.	46.33	71.33	25.50
Algiers.	54.32	74.41	20.09
Cairo.	58 52	85.10	26.58

From this it may be seen that while Nassau cannot be compared for equability of temperature with Madeira it is decidedly superior to Nice, Algiers, and Cairo: while the difference between

* Bacot's Bahamas, p. 53.

it and New York—for instance—is a sufficient evidence of its value as a refuge for all whose health demands a freedom from extremes. Visitors from more rigorous climes find it difficult to say whether they are wintering here in summer or summering here in winter. The seasons seem transposed, and the calculating genius is chloroformed, and the climate. Frost and snow are known to most Bahamians only by hearsay. It is very rare indeed for the thermometer to fall below 60 deg. The average summer temperature in the shade runs from 75 deg. to 85 deg.—this is from May to October. The Winter average (from November to April) varies from 63 deg. to 75 deg. The range of temperature in the Bahamas is about 22 deg. the greatest summer heat exceeding the average by 12 deg., and the sharpest winter cold falling below it by 10 deg.

The rainfall in Nassau is heavy but is restricted mainly to the summer months. The average as recorded by the Government Meteorological Observer for the past seventeen years is 50.82. The greatest rainfall during that period occurred in 1887 and was 79.41; the lowest was 25.54 in 1882. There was a prolonged drought in 1898 which resulted in a poor fruit crop and considerable scarcity of provisions; the average was only 42.35. The rainfall last year was more abundant. Heavy dews fall during the winter months, the ground in the early morning often appearing as though much rain had fallen during the night. It is to these dews that the Bahamas owe not a little of their fertility. And it behoves the invalid to beware of them. The

new comer is disposed to smile at the native warning "mind the night air"! But a persistent disregard of it often results in a nasty chill and fever even for the fairly healthy, and the invalid's physician is sure to put an embargo upon such imprudence as sitting or driving much in the heavy dew.

Speaking generally, the prevailing winds in the Bahamas go from North to South round by East. They are frequently called "trade-wind islands" as the breezes thus denominated blow during most of the year. Except in July and August—the hottest months—it is rarely that the mid-day heat is not tempered by a sea breeze. The relative frequency of winds from the principal points of the compass is shown in the following statement which gives the percentage proportion of days during an average year in which they prevailed at 9 a.m.

North	7.2	per cent.
North East	26.2	do.
East	24.4	do.
South East	18.6	do.
South	11.0	do.
South West	5.0	do.
West	2.3	do.
North West	5.3	do.
<hr/>		
100.0		

North-Easterly and Easterly winds are the most prevalent from September to February, Easterly and South Easterly winds from March to August. The mean height of the barometer at Nassau is thirty inches; it attains its greatest height in December and February and falls to its lowest in October and November. August to October

is the "hurricane season." During this time most of the vessels lie up, the nautical men of these parts knowing from experience that discretion is the better part of valour. Three or four hurricanes have visited parts of the Bahamas during the last ten years, but Nassau, owing to its sheltered position, has almost entirely escaped. This, however, was very far from the case in 1866 when the ocean rolled over Hog Island, rising as high as the gallery of the lighthouse, sixty feet above the level of the sea. It began from the north-east and then, after the usual lull, jumped round to the south-west, and in twenty-four hours Nassau looked like a city sacked by an enemy—and a very powerful and vindictive one too.* But no visitor has any business in the Bahamas during that season. It is enough that we whose lot is cast here should abide by our local interests while the sun blazes and the winds blow, the former as fierce and ceaseless as the latter are inconstant and vehement.

Next to its fortunate geographical position the healthful climate of Nassau is due, no doubt, to the strong and constant breezes that come from the ocean. "If"—says one who spent some time here, twenty years ago, and who wrote the best book on the colony up to that date—"for six consecutive months out of every twelve, it is not one of the healthiest places in the world,

* In 1899 a severe and disastrous hurricane, which by no means left Nassau unscathed, swept over the southern and western islands of the colony. Many lives were lost and a great deal of floating property, and houses, plantations, and crops so injured that it will be some time before the Bahamas recovers from this hurricane which, by its ferocity and sad effects, has quite put that of 1866 into the background.

it is the fault of the people. From November to April the seeds of malignant diseases will not germinate in its healing and healthful air, if wise sanitary regulations are made and enforced. She owes it to herself and to valetudinarians who seek health within her limits, to see to it that the pure air from the ocean and the pure water from the clouds shall not be polluted and made inimical to health by neglect of the plainest hygienic principles."* There is but little fear that the local authorities will thus kill the goose that lays the golden egg, by driving visitors from their doors. The well-regulated Quarantine Station at Athol Island, the large and wisely-used powers of the Board of Health, of the vigilance of an able Health Officer, and a competent and energetic Civil Engineer, with sanitary inspectors and other officers at their command, all indicate the determination of the Government to assist nature—who does so much herself—in making Nassau a clean and healthy city. It is nearly fifty years since cholera was seen in the Bahamas, and though yellow fever has shown its ugly head here since that date it has always been imported, not produced locally, and has soon been expelled. The sanitary precautions above referred to render its introduction into the colony to-day a matter extremely unlikely, especially now that Cuba—whence it has formerly come—is being so transformed under the present American protectorate. Even in the heat of summer intermittent fever is slight though frequent among the coloured people, and more serious ailments are proportionally rare.

* Ives' Isles of Summer, p. 200.

In the winter the health of Nassau is well-nigh perfect.

More than one hundred and fifty years ago this excellent climate was known as affording a refuge for invalids of various kinds. Bruce in his Memoirs says: "The Bahama Islands enjoy the most serene and the most temperate air in all America, the heat of the sun being greatly allayed by refreshing breezes from the east; so that it is no wonder the sick and afflicted inhabitants of our other colonies fly hither for relief being sure to find a cure here."* Perhaps even before that time, and certainly ever since then, invalids have sought these shores for health. Amongst them Lawrence Washington may possibly be numbered, accompanied by his young brother George.

The facts of the case are these. Lawrence Washington, while serving Great Britain in the West Indies as a Captain of Virginian Volunteers, contracted consumption. A trip to England, and the waters of the warm spring at home failed to cure him. So much was stated in the *Nassau Guardian* by a correspondent, in February 1899, as also the following facts, said to be related in Woodrow Wilson's *Life of Washington*. "In 1751 his physician ordered him to winter in the Bahamas. George—whom he so loved and trusted—went with him to nurse and cheer him. But even the sea-air of the islands wrought no cure of the stubborn malady, and he came back next summer to die in his prime. George

* Memoirs of Peter Henry Bruce, p. 241.

Washington was in his nineteenth year when the trip to the Bahamas was made. It was his last outing as a boy. He had enjoyed the novel journey with a keen and natural relish while it promised his brother health. Though he was attacked by smallpox (some of the marks of which were permanent) he would have come off remembering nothing but the pleasure of the trip had his noble brother only found his health again.

Over against this extract must be set the following paragraph from a recent book on the West Indies—an exhaustive and interesting volume—by Mr. Robert Hill of the United States Geological Survey. “It is an interesting historical fact that the only foreign trip ever taken by George Washington was made to Barbados in 1752, in company with his brother Lawrence, who was an invalid. Here the “Father of his Country” enjoyed the hospitality of the island, and also had the smallpox. It was a pleasure to revisit the scenes which he had described in his diary, especially the old Christ’s Church, which now stands almost as he saw it.”* Readers must balance the evidence for themselves—Wilson (or his transcriber) *versus* Hill. Perhaps the following paragraph may help somewhat to a solution. “The whites of Barbados are descended from people who were blood-relations of our Virginia colonists, and there are the same family names which are met with in Virginia. Before the Revolution there was an intimate communication between the relatives of the

* Hill’s Cuba and Porto Rico, p. 377.

two distant colonies, and frequent visits were made.* It is more than likely that the discrepancy between the statements has been caused by the unfortunate orthographical affinity which the Bahamas have with Barbados, as also with the Bermudas. This leads not infrequently to an annoying miscarriage of mails and to a regrettable lack of knowledge and interest in the colony.

But it is not only as an interesting fact, or as a possible "puff" for the Bahamian climate that I have related this incident. It has a medical moral, which is this: Lawrence Washington was suffering from consumption; if, then, he went to Barbados he went entirely too far south; if he came to the Bahamas he came when his disease was too far advanced to give the climate a chance of benefitting him. Which leads me naturally to the question, "should consumptives come to Nassau?"

On a matter so important only professional evidence is of any value. Sir J. Clark says: "The climate is not suited for consumptive patients, on account of the rapid changes of temperature, and the prevalence of winds, often of a dry, cold character. At the same time, persons for whose cases a warm climate is indicated, may pass the winter in the Bahamas safely; and residents in the West Indies might derive considerable benefit by a change to these islands for a few months during this season†" Staff-Surgeon Seagrave, who was for some years sta-

* Hill's Cuba and Porto Rico, p. 377.

† Bacot's Bahamas, p. 61.

tioned in Nassau, writes : " Nassau, from November until the beginning of April, is well adapted for consumptive patients ; but an invalid who had reached the second stage would not, in my opinion, have the strength to last out the depressing, weakening effects on the system of the summer heats."* The late Dr. Kirkwood, a highly respected physician, who practised in Nassau for upwards of a quarter of a century, " states that consumption is common enough among the pure black and the coloured population—running its course rapidly, indeed, among the Africans—but among Europeans lung diseases are extremely rare ; and he never had to treat a case of phthisis in a white resident unless he had visited the island as a patient seeking relief."† Dr. F. A. Castle, editor of " New Remedies " said in 1877 : " In the early stages of chronic pneumonia and catarrhal pneumonia, in turbercles, convalescence from acute diseases, and in exhaustion from overwork and worry, the advantage of being able to live, if necessary, out of doors, without the fatigue of heavy clothing, the comparative freedom from risk of catching cold, and the purity of the atmosphere, render this one of the most healthful as well as available resorts of which we have any knowledge."‡ Mr Ives of New Haven, wrote in 1880: " A medical gentleman informed us that in confirmed consumption it relaxes the tissues, and that severe hemorrhages follow. If good in that complaint at all it is only in its early stages.

* Bacot's Bahamas, p. 62.

† *Ibid.* ; p. 61.

‡ Ives' Isles of Summer, p. 202.

This we learned both from observation and from the testimony of physicians on the spot. - One of these said to us, "Don't recommend these islands for consumption and rheumatism."* Dr. W. F. Hutchinson of Providence, R. I., in an entertaining little book published in 1886 says: "For several years it has been my habit to accompany to Nassau invalids in search of renewed strength and vigour, and I have learned by repeated sad experience that consumptives, in anything like an advanced stage, do badly there. But where bronchitis is concerned, or any of the legion of diseases of the throat that scourge our northern land in winter, the case is quite reversed."†

These statements are valuable as showing the limitation of the Bahamian climate. Nassau is not a modern Pool of Siloam. Visitors for health should not make it the last resource, for if they die the climate is unjustly blamed. Nor should persons leave as soon as they feel a little better. The climate should be given a fairly long trial. With regard to consumption it may be said that Nassau presents a first-class field for the "fresh air treatment" so successfully followed at the Nordach sanatorium in the Black Forest and at similar institutions in Europe and the States; here is pure air and warm sunshine of a quality unrivalled.

Without attempting anything like a complete list of the diseases for which the Bahamian cli-

* Ives' Isles of Summer, p. 204.

† A Winter Holiday, p. 123.

mate, *in winter*, is beneficial, some further medical opinions may be of service to those who are in quest of a sanatorium enjoying such advantages as Nassau has to offer.

Dr. O. J. D. Hughes, Vice President of the Connecticut Medical Society and President of the New Haven County Medical Association, in an able article on diabetes read before the last named body some time ago, speaking on this subject said: "Persons who have a diabetic tendency or family history leading that way should live as near as possible to the sea-shore, with a temperature of above 70 deg. F. And just here let me say a word about a paradise for diabetics, a place specially suited for them, and almost at our door-step, namely the Bahamas. Here we have a climate of the ideal summer months all through the winter months. If one prefers still greater quiet and rest than is afforded in Nassau, the capital city, just let the patient take the mail schooner and after a delightful sail of a few hours land on the island of Abaco. Here he can live *à la* Robinson Crusoe. I can recall the case of a friend and brother M.D. whom I sent there, and thanks to a long rest and its climate he is to-day a well man and useful member of our hard-knocked and badly-treated profession."

This reference to one of what are called the "out-islands" of the colony may be supplemented by the statement of Sir J. Clarke who was of opinion that other islands of the group are

* Bacot's Bahamas, p. 57.

healthier than New Providence. He mentions Harbour Island as being the resort of invalids and convalescents from Nassau.* Quite early in the century it had earned for itself the *soubriquet* of "The Montpelier of the Bahamas." Being a very much smaller island and farther out in the ocean than New Providence, Harbour Island is appreciably cooler than the capital; it has no swamp, a splendid beach for riding, excellent facilities for bathing, boating and fishing, and the quiet life of a neat and flourishing little town. A comfortable hotel and an able medical practitioner add to its modest attractions.

Dr. Hutchinson's opinion as to consumption and diseases of the throat has already been quoted. He further says: "I have seen invalids with Bright's disease gain new lease of life beneath these glowing skies. The climatic treatment of this formidable disease can find no locality so advantageous as this in all respects, and a winter residence here will probably prove generally beneficial. But it is in disorders of the nervous system that Nassau is the most perfect sanatorium in the world, excepting only the islands of the Pacific, which are practically inaccessible. The heavy, moist air, the naturally perfect sanitary condition of the island, and the pleasant social surroundings, together with enforced abstinence from business and other cares, operate in a powerful way upon over-tired or overstrained nervous centres." *

Most visitors, unused to sub-tropical regions, usually pass through a few early days of accli-

* A Winter Holiday, p. 123.

mation, and the invalid should exercise caution during this period. Regular habits should be strictly observed, and the greater power of the sun in these parts remembered. Absolute idleness should be avoided as much as unnecessary fatigue, and social pleasures should not be overdone. It is wise to consult a good physician—of whom there are several in Nassau—soon after landing.

Though, as a health-resort, Nassau must be classed lower than Teneriffe or Madeira, it is without question superior as a winter sanatorium to any other place on the east coast of North America; and its advantages of situation, climate, accommodation and healthful recreation, used wisely and at the right period, cannot fail of producing happy results both in the sick and the healthy.

CHAPTER XI.

GEOGRAPHY AND GEOLOGY OF THE ISLANDS.

OVER the sea in the wine-coloured west
Where 'mid amber curtains the golden crest
Of the stalwart sun bows low in rest
 An emerald isle was born ;
But ages after with hearts distressed
The Northmen seeking that island blest
Saw never a sign of their eager quest
 O'er the fateful deep forlorn.

The Lost Atlantis.

“ The earliest history of a country is extant in the names ;
the student needs but to read them.”

FLAVELL EDMUNDS.

IT is astonishing how few persons know exactly where the Bahamas are. That they lie “ somewhere in the West Indies ” a large number of people believe—and in this belief they are quite mistaken. A distinction must be made, marking the very real difference that exists, between this colony and the Antilles, Lesser or Greater. The geographical difference is far more considerable than a casual glance at a small map generally discovers ; the geological contrast is complete and radical ; while social, commercial, and political dissimilarities combine

to complete the distinction. The Bahamas form a group as much apart from the other islands in the American Mediterranean as they are distinct from Florida ; indeed, geographically, geologically, in other respects they have more in common with the latter than the former. It is at present impossible to travel by steamer from Nassau to Haiti, Porto Rico or Jamaica—though it is to be hoped this disability may soon be removed ; and communication between these places by sailing vessels is very infrequent and uncertain. These facts help to show that the Bahamas are a small, self-centered colony ; an insular adjunct to the continent : an unconsidered neighbour to Cuba the famed, the fertile, and—may we not add?—the free ; interesting though obscure, valuable though diminutive.

The Bahamas form a broken chain or congeries of islands, reefs, and cays lying southeasterly of the coast of Florida, having a trend almost parallel with that of the Greater Antilles, and extending over some seven hundred and sixty miles, from 21 deg. 42 min. to 27 deg. 34 min. North latitude, and between 72 deg. 40 min. and 79 deg. 5 min. West longitude. They include over six hundred and ninety islands and islets, and two thousand three hundred and eighty seven rocks, and the total area of the colony is some four thousand six hundred square miles. The aggregate land surface of the group is larger than that of Porto Rico. About thirty of the islands were inhabited at the last census. The most westerly of them, the Biminis, are less than fifty miles from Florida ; from Inagua, the most southerly, the mountains of Cuba may be

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seen in clear weather, and Haiti lies but a day's sail further south ; Abaco, the most northerly of the group, is protected from the open Atlantic by a curving line of cays and the outer reef that stretches westward to the Gulf Stream.

All the islands have certain physical features in common. Seen from a distance they appear as dark, low-lying projections rising out of the emerald sea ; upon a nearer approach the low bush that covers most of them seems olive-tinted in the clear sunlight, but gradually assumes a more vivid hue as the vessel draws closer to the shore. Stretches of gleaming sand appear as intervals of ivory between rugged cliffs of coral rock. There are no mountains and hardly any hills worthy the name from end to end of the group ; and except on some of the largest or most fertile islands but few goodly trees attract the eye. On three or four of the most westerly islands the same species of pine tree that grows so plentifully in Florida flourishes unafraid alike of poor soil and fierce winds. Cocoanut palms stand sentry in graceful solitude or wave their feathery arms in fruitful groves all over the colony ; and wide stretches of mangroves mark the swampy hollows and shallow banks that abound among the islands.

Reefs to the north and eastward, and banks to the south and westward, hem the Bahamas in, make navigation amongst the islands difficult, give more than a hint as to their origin and structure, and generally indicate their distinctive characteristics. The grey, weather-worn cliffs, honey-combed and undermined by the resistless

action of the sea for many centuries, lie for the more part towards the open ocean ; while the glistening beaches generally are found to the westward—"inside," as it is called, well under the lee of the long struggling islands or protecting reefs. These shelving, sun-bleached shores are not formed of the brown silicious material so familiar in northern regions, but are composed of coralline sand made up of the trituated skeletons of echinoderms and polyps, the shells of mollusks, the stony secretions of other marine animals, and the refuse of algæ. In some lights they seem saffron-hued, and in others silver, while in a few favoured spots they are undoubtedly pink. When the tide is out wide stretches of this sand slope down to the glittering water, and in many places are so firm as to make walking or riding a pleasure, and even cycling possible. Querulous gulls catch fish in the tide pools, snipe fly low along the shore or hurry about their business twittering, and crabs scuttle away from the too-observant eye : clusters of seaweed—orange, and umber, and olive-hued—cling to bits of wreckage or protecting boulders,

" And the stately ships go by
To their haven under the hill,"

The numerous and extensive shoals that lie within the protecting barrier of the outer reefs and islands, are all formed of this fine white sand. They do not shift much, except when a hurricane or very heavy weather disturbs the ocean greatly. Over all of them the sea appears a light metallic green, so glittering in the sunlight as to dazzle the eye, and in calm weather affording a striking illustration of the biblical

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phrase "a sea of glass mingled with fire." Some of these shoals are of large proportions, as in the Bight of Acklin's or Cat Island, inside the Abaco cays or to the westward of the Exuma cays. But the largest of them is the Great Bahama Bank, where, for over hundreds of miles, the water is quite shallow. It is here more than anywhere, out of sight of land, one seems to be sailing over a submerged Sahara or an infinite mill pond.

Geologically the Bahamas are not composite lands like the Greater, or volcanic summits like the Lesser Antilles, but are largely of coralline origin. Professor Agassiz's researches led him to the conclusion that they are wind-blown piles of shell and coral sand, once much more extensive than now, whose areas have been restricted by a general regional subsidence of some three hundred feet. It is, however, certain that they are formed of skeletal debris composed of calcium carbonate extracted from the ocean and assimilated by coral polyps and other marine organisms. This is the rock-making material of all the non-volcanic islands of the Archipelago, and is found in the form of calcareous cliffs and rocks, submerged reefs, sandy islands and far-reaching shoals, whose varying conditions and appearances are determined largely by their situation.

The rocks of the Bahamas are æolian in formation and the fossils they contain resemble present species—facts which indicate the recent character of the islands. The surface is in many places covered with grotesque excrescences produced by the wearing away of the softer por-

tions of the rock.* Closer examination shows these excrescences to be formed of water-worn grains of calcareous material, comminuted coral and shell compactly cemented together. Evidence is not wanting of ramifications of plant roots of an exterminated flora. The juice of the roots acted upon the sand immediately surrounding them and formed a protecting shell. Through erosion and subsidence this vegetation became extinct. Fossil corals of recent type are found above high-water mark ; large caves exist with their floors above tide-level, together with other evidences of land elevation. Everywhere the surface shows strongly apparent traces of the action of the sea. Many of the islands discover æolian rocks in process of formation, and in several of the bights and creeks of the group the deposition of foraminifera has been so great within recent years that former channels have become too shallow for approach. These facts help to shew that the topography of the islands has undergone and is still undergoing considerable changes.

A brief mention must be made here of the relation the Bahamas bear to the continent and to other groups of the West Indian archipelago.

* Grotesque forms of rock by denudation: The Glass Window, a large huge serrated aperture through which the blue tossing of the Atlantic on the Eastern side of Eleuthera could be seen as through an open window. But a recent hurricane broke down the top of the frame and now it is no longer unique. Hole-in-the-Wall, the Southern point of Abaco, whose name sufficiently describes it ; the Cow and Bull rocks near New Providence, the Devil's Tea Table in the Bight of Abaco, and the House and Kitchen off Eleuthera are samples both of the names and the imaginary shapes of these strange specimens of marine sculpture ; while rocks whose form is supposed to resemble human features are represented by Ridley's Head as the North West point of Eleuthera.

"These islands are merely the exposed tips of a great submerged ridge, having an outline and configuration which would be crudely comparable to the island of Cuba if the latter were so submerged that its highest points merely reached the surface. In fact, the trend and character of this bank are such as to suggest that it might possibly represent one of the lost Antilles. It is more of a peninsular than an island, projecting as it does South Eastward from the narrow submerged shelf of the Atlantic coast—a kind of submarine extension of Eastern Florida, as it were. It is reasonably certain that the West Indian lands before the close of the Tertiary period were much more extensive than now, and that the Greater Antilles were once a connected body of land. Furthermore, geological surveys have proved that, during this time the Gulf Stream flowed out from the American Mediterranean as now, but through a passage, across the Northern half of Florida, completely severing the West Indies from North America, and that Southern Florida, was at one time a West Indian island ; while the Bahama Banks to the Northward made a long peninsular projecting out from Florida ; but man had not at that time appeared upon the earth, or, if so, it has not been proved."* This fact sufficiently accounts for the similarity of the Bahamas to the Florida Cays and even to the mainland, and also for its complete unlikeness to the West Indian islands proper.

The political geography of the Bahamas is indicated in its nomenclature, which throws an

* Hill's "Cuba and Porto Rico." p. 383.

interesting side-light upon the changeful fortunes of the colony. It has evidently passed through three periods of occupation, the Carib, Spanish and British. During the first the names of the islands probably indicated some local quality which cannot now be traced. The Spanish names were arbitrary, mostly of a religious significance and, like their dominion, transitory. The British names have mostly some allusion to geographical features, or to striking circumstances connected with their landing, with sometimes a trace of brusque humour or grim irony.

Lucayos is probably the native name of the group. In his account of the landing Columbus says in his Journal "We came to a small island of the *Lucayos* called Guanahani." The group is so called by La Cosa (Columbus' pilot during his second voyage) in his map of 1500, and by Herrera, the Spanish chronicler in his map of 1601. Its present denomination is derived from the native name (Bahama) of the most Western island which probably was, in the seventeenth century, the landfall of the later and more permanent immigrants from the continent. No light can be thrown upon the meaning of either of these names. McKinnen says "It occurred to me, on recollecting the *Leucadia* of the ancients, that these islands, which are also remarkable for a white calcareous rock, might have derived their name from the same quality. *Lucaya* or *Yucaya*, however, is an Indian word, and it is said the islands were generally called *Lucayas* by the natives."* The Spanish geographers

* Edward's West Indies—Appendix on the Bahamas—Volume IV. Page 331.

divided the islands into three distinct groups lying east of the Florida Stream, and having three entrances to it, the Providence, Santaren, and Nicholas Channels; these groups they called the Bahamas, Organos, and Islands of the Martyrs (The Florida Cays.) It should be remembered that, geographically though not politically, the Turks and Caicos Islands form a portion of the Bahama chain, and are so considered in this chapter.

Abaco. La Cosa and Herrera both spell it Habacoa. The latter places an island which he calls Yucayoneque to the North of his Habacoa. This may be the Little Abaco of to-day. But in an old chart of 1799 I find the whole of the island thus called. It is possible that in those days of inaccurate knowledge Great and Little Abaco were not known to be separate. "Lucayoneque or Yucayoneque is the largest and the last of the Lucayos towards the North. Laet places it between 27 deg. and 28 deg. without indicating its extent, which was not well known in his time, in any other way."*

Grand Bahama, is so given in Herrera's map: La Cosa does not mention it.

The Biminis. Probably a Carib word. Not given in La Cosa's map, but called Isla de Beimini in Peter Marty's *Legatio Babylonica* Edit: 1511. Herrera has it as now.

Andros. Called by the Spaniards Islas del Espiritu Santo—Holy Ghost Islands. It derives

* Histoire Générale des Voyages—etc: à Paris, chez Didot, a la Bible d'or. 1746—Vol. XV. p. 636.

its present name from Sir Edmund Andros, who was successively Governor of New York, Massachusetts, and Virginia. It is first mentioned in the charter of the Lords Proprietors granted by Charles II in 1670.

New Providence. No aboriginal or Spanish name appears to be known. It obtained the name Providence from Captain William Sayle of Bermuda, who found refuge from shipwreck in its harbour in 1667. To distinguish it from Providence, R. I. and Providence on the Mosquito Coast, the word "new" was almost immediately added.

Eleuthera. Herrera has Cigateo—probably an Indian name. Afterwards corrupted into Segatoo and Segitto. Its present name, under the form of Eleutheria, was given to it by Captain Sayle and others who migrated thence from Bermuda in 1648, to found a colony of Independents, who hoped to found there a land of religious freedom. In course of time the Greek word became corrupted into the present title. I find it called "Alabaster" in a chart of 1799.

Cat Island. Either Guanahani or Guanima, both Carib words, was probably the ancient name of this island. But a fuller discussion of this subject falls naturally into the chapter on Columbus' landfall. It derives its present name

In my studies of the nomenclature of the Bahamas I am largely indebted to the researches of the Rev. C. C. Wakefield, formerly Archdeacon of the Diocese of Nassau. It is a matter of regret that such thorough and reliable work as Mr. Wakefield did on this subject should have received no more permanent publicity than the columns of the local press.

probably, from domestic cats left there by early settlers, becoming numerous and wild.

Watling's Island. If not the Guanahani of Columbus it is probably the Triangulo of Herrera. Now called after the famous pirate and navigator, Captain Watling; in some old charts spelt Watland.

Rum Cay. McKinnen says was sometimes called Triangulo. A cargo of rum wrecked there long ago is said to have given it its present name.

Exuma. Originally Yumay. So given by La Cosa in 1500; by Herrera in 1601 as Yuma. The origin of the prefix is obscure.

Long Island. Herrera has Yumeto, which name—Bruce says in his Memoirs—it still bore in 1741, though also called by its present title. "Situated just within the Tropics to the south of Yumay, it is fifteen leagues long."* McKinnen—who is a painstaking historian, and usually reliable—thus writes of Long Island. "It was called Yuma by the Indians; of the import of which name in their language I can form no conjecture. But two islands, the one Exuma, lying on the west, and the other Samana on the east, are probably derivatives from it; also some islets lying south east on the margin of the Great Bahama Bank (The Ragged Island cays) "are called by the name of the Yumettas."†

* Histoire Générale des Voyages—Vol. XV. p. 638.

† Edwards' West Indies—Vol. IV. p. 367.

The Crooked Island Group. Crooked Island probably called by the Caribs Samoet, and named Isabella by Columbus. It seems to have been Haiti ("highland") in 1500, though not to be confused with the larger island of that name. A glance at the maps shows the obvious origin of the present title. On some old charts it is called Fernandez (after a wrecked sailor of that name) and on others Samana. Acklin's Island is probably the Yabaque of Herrera. The following statement seems to confirm this; "Yabaque is placed by the same historian (Laet) in 22 deg. 30 min. to the north, and very near Mayaguana."* Acklin is possibly the name of some navigator. Long Cay or Fortune Island derives its first name from its shape, and owes its second—most likely—to the wreckers who formerly made it their windward *rendezvous*.

Mayaguana is Maimana in the earliest maps, but in 1601 appears as now.

Samana is evidently Carib, and appears in La Cosa's map; Atwood Cay is the latter name.

Mira Por Vos, "take care of yourselves" stands thus in Herrera's chart.

The Hogsties is called in early French charts "Les Etoiles," but the rude humour of the buccaneers would suffer no such refinement of nomenclature, so they dubbed it as at present.

Inagua. Its original name was probably Baoruco, as La Cosa has it in 1500. Herrera

* Histoire Générale des Voyages—Vol. XV. p. 638.

gives the Spanish name, in 1601, nearly as now Ynagua. Heneagua was common formerly, and is not quite obsolete. Ynagua is another spelling given in old charts. Either form seems to make the derivation obvious.

The Caicos Group. Probably a corruption of the Caixman of La Cosa's map, which, later, became the Caycos of Herrera. "Les Cayques are several islands which form a circle, separated by a number of channels, and bounded on the east by most extensive sand banks."*

Turk's Islands. Lucayo in 1500 (La Cosa), Los Lucaios in 1511 (Peter Martyr), and, apparently Cauciba, in 1601 (Herrera.) In 1635 a certain George Turk arrived at Bermuda from London, (*vide* Lefroy's Records of Bermuda) but he soon emigrated again, and it is possible that he may have been one of the first of that constant stream of immigrants that was attracted in early days to the Turk's Islands, and which made them, very largely, an offshoot of the older colony. Even now the Turk's Islands have much in common with the Bermudas.

In concluding my brief notes upon this interesting subject, I should like to say how entirely I have been led to agree with the following remarks of Mr. Wakefield. "There is very great difficulty when studying an ancient map in assigning modern names to islands there entered. There is often no attempt at latitude and longitude; the points of the compass are

* Histoire Générale des Voyages—Vol. XV. p. 636.

largely unheeded, and dimensions are out of all proportion. For instance, Peter Martyr in 1511 makes Bimini part of a vast mainland. La Cosa places a great un-named island, half the size of Cuba, to the south of Abaco, and inserts Yumay (Exuma) as a considerable island to the north-west of a tiny Someto (Long Island). Herrera, a hundred years later, does indeed make an attempt at latitude and longitude, but his islands are utterly out of proportion and many degrees out of place. It is as though a navigator had taken his stand on some central island and was seeking information from some barbarous native, who, by a wave of the hand, described an island here and an island there, distant so many sun's sail, and big, big-big, or big-big-big as the case might be, the foreigner meanwhile making a rude map from the indefinite information thus obtained."* An ingenious and highly probable explanation of the origin of our earliest maps of the Bahamas.

* Nassau Guardian, April 23rd, 1892.

CHAPTER XII.

GORALS, SHELLS, AND FISHES.

BELOW the billow's swell
'Mid ancient ooze and slime
The sea-maids sit and tell
Of that mysterious time
Before the coral folk began
To build a home for wandering man,

Song of The Mermaids.

THE Bahama islands lie within that belt of equatorial ocean where alone corals can live and work. Their watery home must be of a temperature not less than 68 deg. Fahr., and this is found only eighteen hundred miles on either side of the equator. It was formerly supposed that they began work in the fathomless depths of the ocean, raising islands by their unaided efforts to within a few feet of the surface. More accurate observation, however, has shown that they cannot exist at a greater depth than forty or fifty fathoms ; so that on the Bahama Banks they have found a secure and convenient base of operations, starting from which they have produced some wonderful effects during long ages of activity.

The most important of the coralligerous zoophytes are the *polyps*, whose form is somewhat like an aster. In the centre lies the mouth, a hollow disc, fringed with petal-like tentacles. Below this lies a stout cylindrical pedicel or body, rough, white and hard, containing the wonderful organism which is constantly secreting the white corallum, building up a skeleton of increasing beauty during its silent life of self-sacrifice. The embryonic polyp is a free swimmer in the sea, which, in a second stage of its life history becomes permanently fixed and begins its work of extracting and assimilating into itself the calcium carbonate which is carried in solution by the surrounding water. Two instincts govern its life, the first is that it must grow upwards towards the light, the second that its watery dwelling should be constantly aerated; this accounts for one side of the reef being always towards the open ocean, and it is there that the life of the polyps is most vigorous. A process differing but little from "budding" in the vegetable world insures the propagation of the zoophytes.

Their life affords a perfect example of collectivism as opposed to individualism. Millions of these tiny creatures are associated in the secretion of a common skeleton, the coral or madrepor, in the minute orifices of which they reside, protruding their mouths and tentacles when under water, but withdrawing themselves by sudden contraction into their holes the moment they are molested. They grow upon the graves of their ancestors; and presently they will die, raising the reef a few inches, perhaps, by the

contribution of their white skeletons, thus continuing the work which has been going on without haste or rest for countless generations.

The principal species of polyps which flourish in Bahamian waters are described by their local names in the account of the "Sea Gardens" (chap. 5.) They are mostly of the genus *Porites*, *Millepora*, or *Madrepora*; the *Agaricia*, *Astræa*, *Meandrina* or *Brainstone*, *Eusmilia fastigiata*, or *Rose Coral*, *Madrepora prolifera* or *Finger coral*, and the *Porites clavaria* are some of the species most frequently found. Of flexible corals the bright-hued *Gorgonias* are the chief. Coral taken from portions of the reef that are always under water is generally found to be full of worms of different lengths and colours, tiny soft crabs, small star-fish, and many other forms of life. Most of these creatures are undoubtedly intruders, whose room would probably be preferred to their company; others may have been seeking food or a temporary shelter in the interstices of the coral; but none bear any relation to the polyps proper, nor assist directly in the construction of the reef.

Among the thousands of *shell-fish* found about these shores one ubiquitous mollusk claims the place of honour; it is the common Conch (*Strombus gigas*.) These useful creatures are scattered in far-reaching colonies or fields on the shallow banks that lie within the Bahama reefs. All over the colony they are found, from Abaco to Turk's Islands, in varying profusion, and, at different periods, in varying perfection. And, because there is no "close time" for

conchs at certain places they are becoming scarce. Often they are taken by simply wading out into shallow water, more frequently by diving; sometimes they are deftly struck by "grains" (a sort of iron harpoon with two barbed prongs, fixed on the end of a staff) as the boat floats slowly past. Having got them on board, the hungry fisherman skilfully knocks off the pointed end and draws out the fish; if he be a wise man he carefully searches for a pearl, which, generally is not found; the small refuse portion of the fish is thrown back into the sea, but not the shell, for conch shells are of value. Then the flesh—which looks rather like grey india-rubber—is cut up and eaten, uncooked and not yet dead, as an occasional squirm in the bloodless morsel bears witness. But it is not bad even thus, especially if a dash of lime juice be available; and cooked conch, bruised to tenderness and cunningly seasoned—whether boiled or stewed *au naturel* or compounded into fritters—is quite a tasty dish; though, I imagine, an analysis would reveal it to be chiefly gristle and phosphorous. There be various sorts of conchs—King, Queen, Twist, Porgie and Lamb—whose shells vary in value; but the flesh of each makes excellent bait, and all are edible. Set in their proper surroundings in emerald sea and bright sunshine, the shells present a picture of vivid beauty as the panting diver throws them up on the hot deck with bits of yellow sea-weed clinging to their curling pink lips or their grey, moss covered backs; and if some of them be Kings, the sun brings out brilliantly the deep maroon and chocolate streaks that alternate upon their broad and glistening faces.

Conch shells are put to several uses; the more perfect specimens are carefully cleaned and polished and sold as marine curiosities, or shipped to the States for the same purpose. The Screw conch (*Triton tritonis*) is used as a sort of horn, and needs no little skill in blowing. Portions of the lip of the conch are carved into brooches, studs, etc., or used for cameo cutting. In large quantities the shells are useful in making rough jetties, filling up swamps, or for other purposes where a mass of debris is required. But the ubiquity of the conch in the Bahamas is shown in yet another way. It is from this shell that the best lime is made; and thus, cremated, the conch pervades the most pretentious buildings of the colony.

It is however, the occasional presence of a pearl that glorifies this humble mollusk, and invests each unopened shell with vague possibilities of wealth. They are found imbedded in the flesh of the conch, and vary greatly in size, shape and hue—from a pin's head to a pigeon's egg, from white to red or light umber; and of course their values differ in proportion. I have seen a pink pearl for which the lucky finder received over £300. It was an exquisite oval stone of a liquid, unearthly pink, with delicate wavy undulations all over its shining surface. I had never seen anything like it before except far off and on a grander scale, when tremulous clouds of a tender pink herald the sunrise in the tropics. It was as if a crystal had caught a fragment of such a cloud's reflection and held it fixed for ever in its pure and stony breast. But this was quite an exceptional stone.

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This mollusk fills so large a place in the economy of Bahamian life that it seemed well to give a much more complete account of it than is possible in the case of its innumerable companions, bivalves, univalves, crustaceæ and echinoderms of many species, that abound on the banks and shores of the group. Mention should be made, however, of a few of the sorts most frequently found. The local name as given here will be to the visitor more generally useful and is certainly more picturesque than the scientific denomination.

The *Sun Shell* (*Tellina radiata*) a beautiful bivalve, of pink and yellow, one to three inches long, is found on shallow banks always under water.

Micra-Mocre : this creature lives outside its house, and clings to a rock, but when disturbed hurries into its beautiful tawny shell, variegated with deep brown bands and spots ; it is one of the finest shells found here.

Conch killer has a thin twisted shell, with light brown spots ; at the end is a thick spur and behind the spur a sucker with which it cleaves to the conch and soon kills it ; the shell is used in calking vessels to dip up pitch and pour on the deck seams.

Panama : a small thick univalve, generally yellowish, but sometimes pink-tinted ; it is found under water on shallow banks ; when pieces of conch are dropped upon the sand, the timid panama comes out to feed and can then be easily

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taken ; this is one of the most valuable shells for export.

Moon-shell : flat, round and white, with four series of holes radiating from the centre ; sometimes called " sea-biscuit,"

Cow-shell : a small thick univalve, amber and orange-hued, having a ridge across the centre ; they are generally found growing on the side of " sea-feathers."

Cockles : almost circular bivalves, of the scallop species, with white corrugated shells, working on a sort of square indented hinge.

Oysters : properly " Racoon oyster," a small and poor relation of the " Blue Point" and his luscious family ; grows on the mangrove roots under water.

Periwinkle : small, rounded shell, mottled grey with small serrated mouth. One of this species is very similar but is called *Bleeding Teeth* because the little ridges at the mouth are orange-hued or reddish.

Eye-shell : pyramid-shaped, but circular, touched with a pearly tint at the mouth ; it has a small scale at the entrance which when taken off is frequently placed in the eye to remove a grain of sand or other foreign matter.

The *Whelk* and the *Curb* though not having shells of any beauty are esteemed as food, made into soup or otherwise prepared ; the former is

round and chequered black and white ; the latter lives outside its shells, clinging to rocks, but has remarkable powers of quick retreat, and curls up its dwelling into a mass of hard wrinkles.

The *Coral Shell* and the *Rice Shell* are two of the tiniest and most exquisite forms found upon these shores ; the former is a bivalve, thin, and pink-tinted ; the latter is a univalve resembling a grain of rice, white and delicate in structure.

Of echinoderms the principal are the *Sea Eggs* or *Sea Cushions* (*Diadema setosum* and *Cidaris tribuloides*) and the *Sea Stars* (*Oreaster gigas*). The sea-eggs are round, with a hollow central mouth, are whitish and covered with a short hairy growth which can be brushed off after they are cured ; or they are black, more oval in shape, and flatter, with long black spines. They look quite large in the water with the spines extended, and certainly merit a very careful avoidance. The sea-star is well described by its name ; it is sometimes more than a foot in diameter, of bright red or orange hue and is covered with hard knobs and ridges.

Within the limits of the present chapter nothing more than a brief catalogue of the principal creatures that are found in Bahamian waters can be attempted. The list of fishes which follows is the result of careful observation and frequent reference to Catesby, Gosse, and other marine zoologists ; and while by no means exhaustive, may claim to be fairly accurate.

On account of their size, ferocity, and villainous expression, to say nothing of their un-

enviable reputation, the *Shark* family generally attracts a large amount of attention from those who visit its *habitat* for the first time. Some six or seven different species are found here, and certainly bear names, whether or not their natural dissimilarities are sufficient to justify them. There is the Fish Shark, which is black, and a great nuisance to fishermen; the Puppy Shark whitish, and not dangerous; the Yellow Shark, which is very savage, and generally eight or ten feet long; the Black Shark, which is small and fierce, and will attack a man or any other creature on sight; the Bonnet Cub or Hammer Shark, so called from its head resembling a mallet, with the eyes at either end; the Flat-head Cub, which is also black, and the largest of all; and the Leopard Cub, grey and spotted with white, and is the most savage of the tribe. The Nurse is also a species of shark, yellow, slow-moving, with blunted teeth, and only savage if first attacked. The Saw Fish is a species of Shark also, with the head prolonged into a flat, long protuberance with serrated edges; it is not more than three or four feet long, but is fierce and vigorous out of all proportion to its size. The shark only deposits two oblong eggs each season which are covered with a tough, horny substance, and have a tendril at each corner with which they are secured in a sheltered spot amongst the stalks of sea-weeds. Some species of Sharks, however, bring forth and suckle their young after the manner of mammals.

Of the fiercer sorts of fish others are the *Stingray*, an oval creature often seven feet long, with a sharp poisonous lance—sometimes two

lances—in his tail; the *Whipray*, a very large fish with a more pronounced head than the Stingray, furnished with formidable teeth and with a long powerful tail; it is speckled white above and quite white below; the *Murray* a powerful, eel-like fish of a greenish grey, spotted with black, sometimes six to eight feet long, and with a sharp tooth fixed in the top of its mouth; and the *Barracouta*, which resembles the *Murray* in shape and style of teeth, is very dangerous and will pitch long distances out of the water after its prey, even attacking men. This last, though sometimes poisonous, is frequently eaten, but not so the other species mentioned.

To these should be added certain of the *Cephalopods*; the *Cuttle Fish*—locally called “Scuttle;” the *Devil Fish*, much rarer and more dreaded; and *Squids*, known as “Squibs.” The prominent greenish eyes and long muscular arms, with cup-like suckers on the ends, the two long tentacles protruding from the head, and the bag of brown fluid which it discharges in jets to hide its whereabouts from its enemy—are all characteristics of this family so well known as to need no further description.

Porpoises abound not only in the ocean but also in shallow water in these latitudes—at least what are generally known as Porpoises. But it is more than likely that here, as elsewhere, the true *Dolphin* is thus called, and that the strong resemblance between this fish and the Porpoise has led to this confusion. What is always called the Dolphin in these parts is really the *Coryphæna*, (*Coryphæna hippuris*) whose green and silvery

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sides flashing in the sun, are often seen outside the reefs.

Sucking Fish. A marine parasite, with a sucker fixed to its head, by which it attaches itself to sharks, stingrays, and other Nimrods of the deep.

King. Ten or twelve feet long, whitish in colour, very strong, resembles mackerel.

Rock. Of four kinds, Black, Gag, Fag-tail, and Rock Hind. They are generally shy but are well worth the trouble of catching.

Plate. Flat, like a sole ; white underneath, spotted on top ; both eyes are on one side of the head ; it has one very long fin.

Balahoo. About a foot long, of a blue-black colour ; usually found in large schools ; has a long under bill.

Hound. Sometimes four feet long, of a bluish tint ; has a long bill at top and bottom, like a pair of scissors ; they often lay like logs in the water.

Rainbow. Its scales reflect the light in many hues—hence its name. Sometimes as long as two feet.

Turbot. Not often large ; bluish-grey tint above, and orange beneath. The Black Turbot, Ocean Turbot—only found outside, and King Turbot are varieties. This last is caught by the Black Fish, who rips them open and eats the liver only, leaving numbers of his victims dead

upon the beach. Turbot scales are so rough and strong that the skin is used for scrubbing floors.

Hind. Common, handsome, very voracious; of a pink hue with brown spots and a large mouth.

Blue. Ten to eighteen inches long; ultra-marine, with pink spots about the head.

Bone. A silvery fish whose name describes its quality. Nevertheless, salted it is a great favourite. Its scales are used in shellwork.

Alewife. Flat, white with long fins.

Hog. So called from the snout-like appearance of its mouth. Sometimes weighs as much as thirty pounds.

School-Master. Bronze-coloured; about a foot long, and three to four pounds in weight.

Sea Hedgehog, or Porcupine. A remarkable creature covered with sharp spines. When alarmed it distends its body almost to a globular shape and erects all its spines. In colour it is grey above and whitish beneath, with dark spots.

Swelling fish. Puffs itself out, like a bladder, when taken from the water; olive-green, with rough prickles.

Flying fish. It has an oval body, about six inches long, and a small toothless mouth. There are two kinds; one is found outside the reef and is edible, the other inside and is not eaten; two fins behind the gills are extraordinarily large and spread out wide, like wings. Strictly speaking they do not fly, but rush through the water with

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such an impetus that when they rise to the surface they are carried forward through the air for a considerable distance, upheld by their huge fins, and seem to be flying.

Rudder. Brown, with yellow spots above, striped yellow and white below; about six inches long. They follow ships for long distances, living in the dead water between the rudder and ship's counter.

Mutton. Reddish brown; much esteemed for its delicate flavour. Catesby says it has five fins, but the spiny one lying along the back is locally called—in other fishes also—the “black sprig”; and is not considered at all. The *Snapper* seems to be related to this fish.

Parrot. Most brilliantly coloured—bluish green with purple and yellow and red markings; not good eating.

Yellow Angel. It has a short, high body, with large fins of a bright blue tint, others are yellow, and the scales are a shade of olive-green; moving slowly through the water, as is its custom, it looks very beautiful. There is also the *Black Angel*, much larger and with a yellow tail; the *Spanish Angel*, with reddish gills and tail, not more than seven inches long; the *French* or *Moon Angel* streaked with six dark vertical bands, sometimes as long as eighteen inches; and the *Four-Eyed Angel* with a black spot, resembling an eye, on each side of its tail. This last is nearly round, with a protruding snout, and is generally about four inches long.

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Trumpet. Shaped like a rolling-pin ; ashy grey, lined with slate colour ; it has a long narrow tail and a sharp tapering bone proceeding from the eyes.

Margate, Market, or Margaret. Large and silvery ; its white fine-flavoured meat is much esteemed.

Grouper. A thick, whitish or dark-grey fish, not unlike a cod, with a high head and mouth ; generally found outside ; an excellent table fish. *Hamlet* appears to be a relation of the grouper.

Sand. It resembles an eel ; white in colour with protruding bones at each side of the jaw ; it burrows in the sand—a sort of marine snake.

Cockeye Pilot. So called from the roving glance of its prominent eyes, seen as it comes to the surface ; black with a yellowish head.

Pork. In calm weather it floats on the water ; is striped with blue ; another variety is yellow.

Black Jack. Dark grey and silver ; they migrate in schools from place to place, about August, and are then called “passing jack.” There is also the *Yellow Jack*, *Amber Jack*, and *Amber fish*, which appear to be all related, though the latter is a large fish and is only found outside. All have the same excellent, firm, whitey-brown flesh.

Shell. Of this there are three varieties, all of which are triangular in shape and covered with a horny shell. The *Cow fish*, so called

because of the horns that protrude over its eyes; the *Tame* or *Cuckold* Shell Fish, thicker than the former but not so large, and of a mottled grey hue ; the *Sky Shell Fish*, the largest of the three, sometimes a foot long, and of a yellowish tint. The flesh of all is firm and white, very like the breast of a chicken, and is excellent when baked.

Squirrel Fish is of a vivid scarlet and of a most graceful shape ; so called because the sound it makes resembles a bark.

Jaw Fish. This is the largest edible fish found in the Bahamas ; one not seldom weighs as much as three hundred pounds. Its flesh resembles halibut. At certain seasons it lies dormant and refuses to take the most enticing bait. Then the determined fisherman dives into the water, and, with reckless dexterity, actually fixes the hook in its gills or mouth. Incredible as this may seem it is nevertheless quite true ; and more than one adventurous Bahamian has lost a hand or sustained other injuries in his eagerness to effect a capture.

Amongst smaller denizens of the deep there are the Porgie, Grunt, Pilchard, Yellowtail, Runner, Sennett, Mackerel, and Bonita—a beautiful pearly fish of the mackerel family.

Three sorts of *Turtle* are found in the Bahamas. Green Turtle, Hawksbill, and Loggerhead. The first is the best kind for eating, the second is valuable on account of its shell, and the third—which is the largest—though generally eaten, like the others, has much coarser

meat. Their weight is anything from a four pound Hawksbill to a four-hundred pound Loggerhead. From April to July they lay, crawling up on a secluded beach, scraping a hole, and depositing therein from one to two hundred eggs, which are carefully covered up and left for the sun to hatch—which is done in about a fortnight. Two or three times in a season the female turtle repeats this operation, the number of eggs largely decreasing with each deposit, till at last she lays but three or four. Turtle eggs are about an inch in diameter, with a soft, white, leathery covering. It is an unfortunate and short-sighted policy which takes them recklessly each season—though they are pleasant enough to eat and most nourishing—and thereby causes turtle to become scarcer every year. Hawksbill still is a valuable article of export, and the whole back, or a complete shell and head, when properly cured and polished, forms a valuable souvenir of the Bahamas.

Seaweed abounds upon the shores of these islands. It is most plentiful after a "rage" or heavy winds. The Sargasso Sea, as it is called, which is entered miles away from Nassau, contains the most wonderful specimens of these marine plants, with the floating colonies of crustacea and zoophytes they bear along with them. In addition to the sargossos—which are not like ordinary seaweeds—there are other species, of various hues and differently shaped leaves. Most of them present a vivid and pleasing contrast to the sparkling green waves or the gleaming sand as they are tossed back and forth from sea to shore. And herein lies their chief beauty.

CHAPTER XIII.

FAUNA OF THE BAHAMAS.

GREEN humming-birds delight the eyes,
Spangled and swift and sharp of bill;
And be vies of saffron butterflies
Flit to the finches melodies
And trilling of thrush o'er vale and hill.

Songs of Summerland.

THE Fauna of these islands can never have been varied or abundant; their size and structure, and the small facilities they offer for maintaining animal life to any extent, quite preclude such a possibility. It is probable, however, that in the aborigines' days they possessed some of the creatures now found only on the southern islands; and Juan La Cosa refers to the native dogs, a breed which did not bark, but were made pets of and fattened for eating. He says, "At first there were no dogs at St. Domingo but a small mute creature resembling a dog with a nose like that of a fox, which the natives call *aco*. The Indians were so fond of these little animals that they carried them on their shoulders wherever they went, or nourished them in their bosoms." The Bahamian dog of to-day is neither mute nor fat, and is not loveable.

The Spaniards or Buccaneers stocked several of the islands with cattle, sheep, horses, etc. probably not intentionally. There are troops of wild horses, donkeys and cattle roaming about the savannahs of Inagua that probably are the descendants of these. And on Abaco predatory borders of wild hogs are one of the standing excuses for poor crops of vegetables. These are the progeny of once-tamed pigs, though they have reverted to their original type and gone back to tusks and activity. They are hunted assiduously both on account of their flesh, which is much sweeter and more wholesome than that of the home-fed pig, and also to try and reduce the breed. Harbour Island used to be noted for a capital breed of horses, and both from this place and other Eleuthera settlements some hardy and good-looking nags have been sent to Nassau. It is said that the race was started by some Arab steeds once wrecked in that vicinity.

But, on the whole, it must be said that the Bahamas are deficient in animal life. The entomology of the islands is varied and interesting; and there are many species of lepidoptera and diptera, especially in the summer. Atwood's Cay is said to possess a small mammal, the *Utia* or *Outi*, not elsewhere found in the colony. This I believe to be the *agouti*—the *mus aguti* of Linnaeus, and the *cavy* of Buffon—which was formerly common to all the West Indies and is a species intermediate between the rabbit and the rat. The racoon is found and hunted on a few islands, and is considered a table delicacy. But the musk-hog, opossum, monkey, and other creatures still found on the Greater and Lesser

Antilles are absent from the Bahamas. There are however, many species of the *Sauria*, or Lizard family, though the chief of that tribe, the *Alligator*, is lacking—probably owing to the want of rivers in the group. Bruce says that alligators were often caught here a hundred and fifty years ago; and half a century later McKinnon ate alligator at Acklin's and says it resembled sturgeon, but it is quite possible they were immigrants from other shores. In 1886 a living alligator was washed ashore at Inagua on a log of mahogany, having probably come from Haiti. The largest *Saurian* now found on the shores is the *Iguana*. Formerly they were plentiful, but are now found chiefly on the west side of Andros. "Never was more harmless creature invested with more frightful aspect. Clothed with scales, like the alligator, but finer and more flexible, with a long, slender and powerful tail, a gular pouch, hanging like a dew-lap beneath its throat, and having along its back from head to tail a crest of spines, it would not be attractive were it not for its beautiful colours of varying green and yellow, and its brightly glancing eye. In the islands where it exists it is eagerly sought as food, and its flesh is palatable and delicate, as I can testify from experience, being white, tender and nutritious."* That worthy missionary Père Labat, in his interesting old book "*Nouveau Voyage aux Isles d'Amerique*," published in 1712, compares fricasseed iguana to chicken for its whiteness and delicate flavour, and gives a racy account of catching one with the aid of a running noose and much whistling.

* Ober's Camps in the Carribbees, p. 256.

The iguana measures from two to five feet in length, and is valued to-day, and considered worth a high price, as a table delicacy.

Many varieties of *lizards* are to be found on all the islands, green and yellow, grey and amber-tinted, which change colour like the chameleon, and wage a dexterous and unceasing warfare against the countless insects that swarm in the sunshine. Often they can hardly be distinguished from the rocks or tree-branches where they make their home. Not only do they differ in colour but in the shape of the head—some having diminutive horns—and in the length and curliness of the tail. They are always attracted by musical sounds, but are very shy, and possess great agility in escaping from danger. None of them are dangerous, for though their wide mouths are furnished with simple teeth, their bite is no more than a smart pinch. The Bahamas are singularly free from injurious *reptiles*. Fowl snakes and black snakes found here are timid and not poisonous, though the former often plays havoc with the country hen roost. The centipede, tarantula or ground-spider, and the scorpion, are objectionable, but fortunately, not very common except in old stone houses or dim recesses of the woods; their bite is painful, sometimes dangerous, but not often fatal.

The *birds* of the Bahamas are of many sorts, interesting and beautiful, though but few are very large. The late Dr. Bryant contributed to the records of the Boston Society several valuable lists and descriptions of Bahamian Birds, as

long ago as 1859, and his researches may be read in Vols : VII, IX and XI of the Proceedings of that Society. Mr. N. B. Moore has also contributed a list of birds, chiefly migrants from North America to Vol. XIX of that series. But in the imposing volume of Professor Cory of Boston will be found the most complete account of the ari-fauna of these islands.

The king of Bahamian birds is undoubtedly the *Flamingo* (*Phœnicopterus Ruber. Linn :*) It was formerly plentiful on the larger islands but is now becoming scarce. The reckless way in which the young are taken, often when just hatched, and the older birds shot for their flesh or wings or captured for sale as curiosities, is lamentable. This wholesale destruction—as cruel as it is short-sighted—is causing the flamingo to go the way of the dodo and solitaire. Only in the Inagua salinas and the marshes of Abaco and Andros are they to be found at all, and soon, it is to be feared, the species will become extinct. Columbus and his followers observed a great number of what they called “tall red birds” on the south side of Cuba ; these were probably flamingoes. Late in May is the best time to see these gorgeous birds, and the sight is quite worth a journey to Inagua. A military figure seems best to describe them. To behold a battalion of these brilliant creatures standing in a saltpan, their long black legs rising sharply from the brackish water, every few seconds bending their graceful necks to feed while the evening sun shines on their bright pink breasts and crimson wings, is a sight to be long remembered. Suddenly their scouts see you, and a

hoarse alarm is given by the farthest outpost. The great wings flap and gleam, the long necks are stretched out, and the long legs gathered up as the regiment rises in dignified flight and soars away screaming. They are difficult to shoot, and still more difficult to capture : they never live long in captivity, and their plumage soon loses its brilliant sheen. But to have seen them in their native haunts is a thing to be thankful for. The flamingo's nest is made of mud and is of sugar-loaf shape, with a depression at the top in which the egg is deposited. While hatching the bird sits on the nest with its legs hanging down on either side, and looks most ludicrous. Occasionally, in heavy rains, the water overflows the nests and thousands of eggs are destroyed ; the egg is large and white, covered with a rough chalky substance ; many persons enjoy eating them. The flesh of the flamingo is rich and tender but has a slightly fishy flavour ; the tongue, though delicate and very good, hardly seems to merit the encomiums the Ancients pronounced upon it, at whose feasts a dish of flamingo tongues was considered a *pièce de résistance*.

Turning, at once, to the opposite end of the scale, the charming little *Humming Bird* demands attention as being unique amongst the birds of these islands. Four varieties have been found here. The Bahama Woodstar (*Doricha Evelynæ*) is very abundant near Nassau. It is green above, with golden reflections on the back, and the tips of the feathers are bluish. It has a beautiful purple-violet throat, with a white band below. Its wings are of a brownish tinge

and the tail dark purple. The Lyre-tailed Humming Bird (*Doricha Lyrura*) has the same general appearance as the former with a beautiful purple forehead and throat and a tail shaped somewhat like a lyre. It is restricted to Inagua. Ricord's Humming Bird (*Sporadinus Ricordi*) is a bronze green, with purplish-brown wings and a forked tail. Cory found it on Andros; previously it had been considered by Gould and others as restricted to Cuba. Brace's Humming Bird (*Sporadinus Bracei*) is nearly like Ricord's but is smaller and has a longer bill; also the green of the crown and throat is paler and of a more steely shade. The only specimen known to be in existence was taken near Nassau by Mr. L. J. K. Brace. The humming bird's nest is made of silk-cotton matted together, with lichens and dry sticks for an outer framework. They only lay two eggs which are rosy-pink but turn snow white when blown. Swiftly passing from one sunlight blossom to another, fluttering over the bell only long enough to extract the hidden insects, these graceful, dazzling little birds give just the necessary touch of life to the tropic garden.

One of the first birds that attracts attention here is the *Bahama Finch* (*Spindalis Lina*). It is black above with an orange breast shading into yellow; the belly is white and the head and throat are streaked with white; the bill is bluish and the legs black. It is commonly called the "banana bird"; but this name is applied to all the small, fruit-eating birds of which no other name is known. Occasionally one meets an old negro who calls it the cachou or casha bird,

under which name—Gosse says—it is known in Jamaica. It eats small berries, insects, and sometimes fruits. It is abundant on New Providence but not common on the windward islands.

The *Banana bird* or Bahama Honey-creeper (*Certhiola Bahamensis*) is quite common. It is a greyish black with a bright yellow breast; the wings and tail are tipped with white. It lives on insects and honey. The clusters of the life leaf are its favourite hunting grounds; it thrusts its bill through the petals, not into the flower, in its search of insects. It also likes the juice and pulp of sour oranges.

The *Tobacco Dove* is very abundant all over the colony. (*Chamæpelis Passerina*). It is a small, brownish-grey bird with a blue tinge on the crown, and is very tame. Its nest is a little mat of grass, loosely put together, lying on the ground under the shelter of a large tuft. The eggs are white. The *Wood Dove* (*Zenaides Macroura*) is also found on most of the islands. It is a solitary, brownish-grey, Quaker-like bird, whose mournful note is heard in most sequestered coppices.

Another family largely found in the Bahamas is that of the *Warblers* (*Sylvicolidae*). One, the yellow-throated warbler, is quite a local bird, all known specimens having come from New Providence. It is bright olive green above, having a black band passing from the sides of the neck and over the forehead; the under parts are yellow shaded with olive. The female lacks the black band, and the plumage is paler. It is

of a large size and has rather carnivorous propensities for one of this family.

The lack of notable songsters amongst Bahamian birds is quite remarkable. To this there are only two or three exceptions. The *Blue Thrasher* or plumbeous thrush (*Minocichla Plumbea*) is one. It is slate-coloured with a white patch at the base of the bill; it has a black throat, an almost black tail, and red legs and eyelids. It is nearly a foot long. Very few specimens are found in even large museums, and for years it was considered rare, but it is abundant on New Providence and Abaco. It is seldom seen, being generally concealed in some thicket whence its pretty little song issues on the fragrant evening air. Much rarer, and a far finer songster is the *Mocking bird* (*Munius Bahamensis Bryant.*) This is quite different in its habits from the American variety, being solitary, and generally found on isolated cays. Only rarely is it seen on New Providence. It lays in May, and about that time, or earlier, its clear, rich song is heard at its best. It eats prickly-pear, mostly, and occasionally insects.

The *Paw-Paw bird* (*Margarops Fuscatus*) is found on Inagua, inland generally, where it builds in the hollows of trees. The *Cat bird* (*Munius Carolinensis*) is dark slate-coloured above, paler underneath, with black tail and legs. It is found on most of the islands. These also are of the thrush family.

The *Fighter* (*Pitangus Bahamensis*) is one of the Fly-catcher tribe. It is a grey bird with a

tinge of olive on the back; the tail is dark brown, as are also the wings, which are edged with a yellowish white. It is very common, though not so much seen in the winter. It resembles the kingbird of the United States. It is of a rather pugilistic nature—hence its name—and moves with a strong, rapid flight, frequently swooping upon its prey, like a hawk. It feeds largely upon lizards. The *Death bird*, or Goat Sucker, (*Antrostomus Carolinensis*) is also of the Fly-catchers. It is reddish-brown in colour, streaked with black. It is only found in winter and is not at all common. It has a peculiar twittering cry, which is always said to herald someone's death. The little night-hawk or *Pity-me-Dick* (*Chordeiles minor*) as it is locally called, from its sweet, peculiar cry, is another of the Fly-catcher family. It is dark brown, variegated with white, and has a tawny chest and belly. It is generally seen about sunset, flying in search of insects. It deposits a single egg on the sand without any attempt at a nest.

The *Crow* or *Turkey Buzzard* is not found on New Providence, Cory thinks, because of the scarcity of animal food; but both he and Bryant—strange to say—found them on Abaco and Andros, where there is absolutely no animal food but fish. *Snipe* and *Sand-pipers* are found in flocks on all the open beaches. The *Arsnicker* or Great Blue Heron (*Ardea Herodias*) is greyish-blue above with brown neck and black head, and a black and white breast. This also frequents the beaches and small inland ponds; its flesh is considered a great delicacy. The *Inagua Heron* (*Ardea Cyamrostris*) owes its inclusion in

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recognised lists of birds to Mr. Cory who found it in large numbers on Inagua but not on any other island. It resembles the Louisiana heron, but is somewhat darker and has a longer bill.

Numbers of sea fowl are always to be seen in sailing amongst the Abaco and Exuma cays, and in lesser numbers elsewhere; brown *Pelicans* standing immovable as statues on the rocks, suddenly assuming surprising proportions; *Mendo'-War* or Frigate Birds, whose dark, clean-built forms are strongly silhouetted against the clear blue of the sky; and flocks of black-headed *Gulls*, standing in military order, each facing the same way on the rocks rise and wheel off at one's approach. On most of the small uninhabited cays, gulls breed in large numbers late in April. The nest is made of rushes and grass and contains three or four olive-green eggs with dark brown spots like a turkey's, which are sat on alternately by the male and female bird and hatched in about eighteen days. While the fledglings are feeble the parent birds defend them with great assiduity and courage. It lives principally on fish—the small fry swimming near the surface of the water; it does not dive but skims over the water and snatches up its prey.

Sooty Terns or *Egg birds* (*Sterna fuliginosa*) breed in hosts in the early summer, as do their cousins the gulls. Their medley of harsh cries and the whirring of thousands of wings is deafening, and quite drowns the sound of the waves by its strident insistence. Peeping through the tangle of low shrubs the old birds may be seen

sitting on their single egg, laid on the ground without a nest of any kind; and they can generally be caught with ease, snared in the trailing vines as they attempt to fly. The bird resembles a large and powerful swallow, with a sharply forked tail, snow-white neck and breast, and the rest of the plumage dull black. The egg is cream-coloured and spotted with umber and lilac. The persistent stealing of their eggs is gradually lessening their numbers and increasing their shyness. The Wilson's Tern, *Shanks* or *Red Shanks*, as they are called (*Sterna hirundo*) are also plentiful here, as well as the Least Tern (*S. superciliaris*). The former are olive-green in hue and cone tipped; their coral bill and feet and pearly wings cause them to fall victims every season in huge numbers to the barbarous demands of fashion. They have a wide range and may be considered the most beautiful of a handsome family. They are called "great" and "little strikers" by the fishermen on the Carolina coast.

Of land birds not already mentioned the *Parrot* and *Owl* should be referred to. The former used to be plentiful, but is now restricted to Acklin's Island. It is a small green sort, and when captured can be made to acquire a limited vocabulary. The barn owl and the Florida burrowing owl are found on several islands.

Shearwater, Gannets, Stilts, Plovers, Cormorants, and Ducks abound about the shores and marshy places. On the many little islands their eggs may be gathered by the barrel-full in the breeding season, and they are largely eaten.

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The ubiquitous mosquito—those “leeches perched on wings,” as Carleton calls them—the beautiful fire-fly, the repulsive cockroach, the slimy frog, that most annoying parasite the chigoe or “jigger,” (*Pulex penetrans*) and hosts of other insects, noisy or noisome according to their nature, do their best to supply the lack of larger animals which is the inevitable lot of the Bahamas.

CHAPTER XIV.

FLORA OF THE BAHAMAS.

RED are the blooms of the fragrant fires
That glow in the tropic light;
But when the King of the day retires
Bathed in the blaze of his funeral pyres
Blossoms of white which the moon admires
Sweeten the soundless night;
For heaven is hushed as the angel choirs
Bend to the blessed sight.

Songs of Summerland.

THIS chapter is simply a series of notes on the principal flowers, trees, fruits, and vegetables of the Bahamas, fairly accurate, it is to be hoped, and interesting, but by no means exhaustive. Messrs. Brace and Gardiner's pamphlet on the plants of these islands will supplement this sketch; and Gosse, Kingsley, Edwards, Hill, and many another naturalist writing of the West Indies will be found to give much interesting information on this limited section of their subject.

Though New Providence is one of the smaller islands of the group its fertility and sheltered position have caused it to become, one may say, the Botanical Garden of the Bahamas. Here are found representatives of nearly all the plants and flowers that grow in the colony.

Especially striking are the trees, whose unusual appearance, and green, wide-spreading foliage are, in the winter months, pleasant signs of Summerland. But what may be seen in the winter gives no adequate idea of the luxuriance and beauty of Bahamian flora; nor will much be gained, in this regard, by a visit prolonged into the Spring—though there are many deciduous trees even in the tropics. The most gorgeous trees and flowers reserve their finest appearance for the moist, hot months of Summer.

Almond Trees (Terminalia catappa). Though resembling magnolias they are not of the same family. This is the Demerara almond, not that of commerce. Kingsley says: "The almond tree, with its flat stages of large, smooth leaves, and oily, eatable seeds, in an almond-like husk, is not an almond at all or any kin thereto. It has been named—as so many West Indian plants have—after some known plant to which it bore a likeness, and introduced hither, and indeed to all shores from Cuba to Guiana, from the East Indies through Arabia and Tropical Africa, having begun its westward journey, probably, in the pocket of some Portugese follower of Vasco de Gamo." (*cit Last, p. 104.*)

Casuarina or Cassowary (Casuarina equisetifolia). So called from the likeness of its long delicate branches to the hair of the Cassoway, and *equisetifolia* because its stems and leaves resemble the weed *equisetum* or horsetail.

Besides the *Cocoa-nut (Cocos mucifera)* there are several different members of the family of

Palms (*Palma*) in the Bahamas; the *Cabbage Palm* (*Euterps oleracca*), *Palmetto*, *Royal Palm*, and *Date Palm*. The grace and distinction of these beautiful trees is inevitably associated with the scenery of these latitudes.

Sand-box tree (*Hura crepitans*.) Did this tree get its name from the peculiar shape and appearance of its seed? It resembles very much the ancient, pepper-pot sort of arrangements, called "sand boxes," with which an earlier and less hurried age used to sprinkle the wet ink of its letters and manuscripts in lieu of blotting paper.

Of the *Leguminosæ* family many specimens are found here. The *Tamarind* (*Tamarindus indica*) is one. It frequently attains a large size, and its delicate, spreading foliage makes it one of the handsomest of Bahamian trees. It bears brown, leguminous pods, containing an acid pulp which surrounds the seeds. The *Monkey Tamarind* (*Adamsonia digitata*) is another variety. Some old and very large specimens of this tree are to be seen in Nassau. It gets its name from the fact that in Jamaica monkeys are sometimes caught while attempting to obtain the seeds from the large, woody pods which the tree produces. Another member of this family is called the *Whistling Bean* or *Singing Tree* (*Albizia Lebbek*.) It sheds its leaves in winter and bears upon its gaunt branches numbers of pale yellow pods, about eight inches long; these swaying in the wind make a murmuring noise—hence its picturesque name. The *Poinciana* (*Poinciana palcherrima*) is another of the *Leguminosæ*. It is a relative of the Sensitive Plant (*Mimosa*). It, also, sheds

its leaves in winter, and has long, dark brown pods. But the gorgeous beauty of its crimson blossoms is a sight reserved for Summer-time. Its flaming splendour seems to accentuate the scorching whiteness of the streets, and the insistent screech of countless *singers* among its branches increases the general glare and discomfort of the tropic day. Many interesting vines belonging to this family are found in the pine barren and palmetto scrub, such as the *Wild Liquorice* (*Alrus precatorius*). It produces clusters of pods containing bright red seeds with a black spot at one end. These are sometimes called "Black-eyed Susans," and are largely used in making shell-work; indeed, many people think they are a kind of shell or marine growth so identified are they with such productions. There is also the *Nicker* (*Guilandina Bonducella*), a prickly trailing shrub. From its flat pods boys take the red, yellow, or olive-tinted beans and use them in various games, sometimes instead of marbles.

Fine specimens of the *Silk Cotton* tree (*Bombax ceiba*), a native of South America, of the *Malvaceæ* family are found in Nassau. The enormous one standing behind the Public Buildings is undoubtedly of a great age; it is said to have been introduced from South Carolina, and to be the Ancestor of all the others. Growing from its trunk are several buttress-like extensions, evidently thrown out to brace it and assist in bearing the weight of its giant branches which spread out on all sides as far as one hundred and sixteen feet. Its pods contain a soft silky material often used for stuffing pillows. Evil spirits are

said to haunt these trees, and the negro very much objects to cutting them down.

The *Hibiscus* is also one of the *Malvaceæ*. It is a flowering shrub, seldom growing to a height of more than six or seven feet, and bearing pink, red, or crimson blossoms; there is also a double variety. The *White Cotton* (*Gossypium Barbadeuse*) and the *Red Cotton* of Harbour Island (*Gossypium probiculatum*) also belong to this family. From the latter it was at one time hoped that a cloth might be made to rival khaki-drill, but the experiments were not brought to an entirely successful issue. The *Okra* (*Abelmoschus esculentus*) a purple-stemmed, mallow-flowered plant, whose green pod contains edible mucilaginous seeds, is also an *Hibiscus*.

It is remarkable how many trees and shrubs in these regions bear red or crimson blossoms. Not only is there the poinciana, and the hibiscus, but the *Poinsettia*, each of whose long, bare, curving branches terminates in a flat blaze of leaf-like flowers. There is also the *Oleander*, which, though slender, sometimes grows to the height of 25 feet, with delicate, pointed leaves, bearing white or crimson blossoms of much beauty. A tree somewhat resembling the poinciana is the wild *Pride of Barbados* with clusters of red flowers here and there relieving the green of the surrounding bush. Two or three varieties of red *Lilies* give colour to the winter landscape, and the red *Canna*, or Indian Shot, and the waxen pink *Shade flower* flourish side by side with *Begonias*, *Geraniums* and many another plants well known in the gardens and conservatories of the North.

Roses in the Bahamas grow luxuriantly, but run very much to wood, and the choicer varieties and colourings are not common, red and pink are the prevailing tints. There are few, if any damask roses, and nearly all the blossoms lack the fulness and compactness of their Northern sisters; they are born and die in a day and have not the fragrance and lasting qualities a slower growth would give them. This is true of nearly all plants indigenous to temperate regions. Many, such as *violets*, *phlox*, *nasturtiums* and *pansies* will grow; but either the heat of the sun is too intense, or they require the rest of the winter months, or the soil of the Bahamas is too poor, for they never reach perfection; the cultivation of Northern seed-plants is always very laborious and never very satisfactory. Here and there amongst the more sombre foliage one's eye is attracted by the splendour of the leaves of the *Croton*. Many varieties, some of which have been directly imported from Jamaica, are to be found with leaves of all shades, red and yellow, green and brown. The *Croton Cascarella* or *Croton Eleutheria* is used medicinally; the bark being useful as a decoction to check intermittent fever; it is sometimes preferred to Peruvian bark as being less astringent. When exported, the pieces are curled or rolled in a short quill.

The *Colus* is another plant, whose leaves rather than flowers, are prized for their beauty. This, too, abounds in many hues and different varieties. The *Coleadium* is cultivated for the breadth and magnificence of its leaves. These are sometimes green or bronze with powerful

veinings, and the plants are much valued for decorative foliage. The *Datura*, commonly known as the bell flower, in single and double varieties, forces itself upon the visitor's notice by its sweet and powerful perfume especially towards sunset, for the fullness of its beauty can only be appreciated when the fresh white bells open in the evening. It is noticeable that as the scarlet splendour flames in the noonday, so, many of the fairest white flowers perfume the moonlight air. The *Moon flower* is a sweet-scented creeper of the convolvulus species. But the queen of the evening plants is undoubtedly the *Night-blooming Cereus*. This lovely flower can however neither be commended for its perfume nor for its elegant growth. It is a variety of cactus, wild and repulsive looking, and in consequence the blossom is difficult to gather. In the journal of the great evangelist, Wesley, its beauty is thus exactly described. "Aug. 24, 1780.—I went on to Bristol. In the evening I saw one of the greatest curiosities in the vegetable creation,—The Nightly Cereus. About four in the afternoon, the dry stem began to swell; about six, it gradually opened; and about eight, it was in its full glory. I think the inner part of this flower, which was snow-white, was about five inches in diameter; the yellow rays which surrounded it, I judged, were in diameter nine or ten inches. About twelve it began to droop, being covered with a cold sweat; at four it died away."* Several varieties of *cactus* are found in the Bahamas. The *Prickly Pear* (*Opuntia ficus Indica*) is ingenous and its straggling thorny

* Wesley's Works. Vol. IV. p. 189.

branches are everywhere seen, especially near the sea-shore, covered with yellow blossoms or purple fruit. The fruit is edible, but is more generally valued for its bright red dye. Another variety of this family is the *Cochineal Prickly Pear* (*Opuntia tuna*). There is also the *Cactus cochinifer*, imported long ago, McKinnen says, from St. Vincent to Acklins, but without the cochineal insect which feeds on its fruit. The *Yucca* (*Yucca aloifolia*) or Spanish bayonet, of the genus *Liliacæ*, bears a white flower somewhat resembling the *Cereus*. Pretty white fancy work is made from the chitinous covering of the leaves. As a general rule, the brilliant scarlet and purple blossoms as the hibiscus, poinsettia and bougainvilleæ have very little, if any, perfume; hardly any of the red or coloured bulbous plants have any attraction beyond their splendour, but the white *Easter* and *Eucharis Lily*, the *Tuberosc*, and even the wild *Spider Lily* are all remarkable for their sweet fragrance. The modest *Jasminc*, of which there are three or four varieties, the delicate star shaped *Frangipani* and snowy *Gardenia* are always desired because of their sweetness.

The *Moringa*, (*Moringa pterigosperina*) or horse-radish plant, is a tall, delicate tree bearing bunches of yellowish-white flowers. It has many valuable properties; from the seed is extracted the ben oil used by machinists and perfumers, as it does not freeze or become rancid; and the root of the young tree, scraped, is a good substitute for horse-radish.

Many strange creepers flourish in the Bahamas, some of which have been imported from

Jamaica and other tropic lands. The *Corralline* or *Coral vine* is very abundant about Nassau ; its bunches of bright pink blossom are an attractive feature of many gardens. The *Alamander*, with its thick green leaves and creamy bells is perhaps one of the most striking and cultivated of creepers.

The wild flowers of the Bahamas are unobtrusive, but all repay a careful study as being a totally distinct class from those of Northern latitudes. A visitor will at once notice the great scarcity of grass ; on some of the sandy cays this is almost more noticeable than in Nassau, but when the poverty of the soil and the almost annual droughts are considered, the lack is no longer to be wondered at, and the difficulty of raising cattle and horses is understood. Inagua, with its green savannahs and herds of wild cattle, is the great exception to the other islands of the group. Many handsome rushes and grasses may be found among the sandhills, and one grass of a delicate mauve colouring, that grows chiefly in swampy places, is remarkably fragile and beautiful.

Fourteen or fifteen varieties of *Orchidæ* are found, but the wild purple orchid (*Bletia purpurea*) is the most common ; in some of the islands it is used medicinally as a lotion. *Air plants*, *epiphytes*, a familiar species of orchid, send out in the spring a wand from which spring small clusters of fragrant yellow blossoms. The Bahamian *daisy* differs from the daisy of English meadows, in that it grows only in swampy places, is white and not pink-tipped and grows

from a long delicate stalk. A large shrub known locally as the *Yellow Popper* flowers profusely in the winter months ; its clusters of yellow making a picture of vivid beauty against a background of delicate green leaves. One of the most picturesque sights of a walk in the bush or pine-barren is some disused well or sheltered rock-hole lined with fragile and graceful fernery. There is the *Maiden hair Fern*, grown almost to the size of a shrub, the *Hay Fern* with its delicate fragrance as of new mown hay, and the *French Fern* with its feathery fronds, besides many other varieties, some fibrous as the *Bracken*, others solitary as the *Tree Fern*, many that are distinctly tropical and others which one easily recognizes as familiar in Northern country walks.

The *Life Plant* (*Bryophyllum calycinum*) grows on nearly all the old stone walls and along many of the road sides. There is an almost unnatural amount of vitality in the fleshy leaves of this plant, for after having been picked, one leaf can be taken home and pinned against the wall, where it will send out small roots and live for a month or so without water or nourishment.

Many wild plants have medicinal properties, some valuable for export and others known only to the Bush Doctor or Obeah man. There are various sorts of *Sage*—white and yellow ; from that weed yonder with its yellow bunches of blossom is gathered the *Dil Seed*, that pungent plant with the feathery fronds is *Aniseed*, here growing low on the ground is *Hore-hound*, that patch of coarse blades is *Fever Grass*, and so on—from the simple native “teas” to the

plants which have been known to the world as drugs for more than a hundred years.

The *Castor oil tree* grows everywhere without cultivation, and in a primitive fashion the beans are crushed and oil boiled from them ; but because of the uncultivated condition of the trees, the beans are neither very large nor oily.

Ginger, Cinnamon, Palma Christi, Vervains, China Root, Squills, Milk-wood and Capillair and other medicinal plants are to be found, but not in sufficient quantities or of fine enough qualities to make any export of them remunerative. Many of the timber and fruit-bearing trees may be used in different forms as drugs ; thus, the barks of the tamarind and prince wood are tonics, of the guava and cocoa-plum astringents ; the resin of Lignum Vitæ is a stimulant in gout and rheumatism, and dogwood bark a narcotic. The cedar has many medicinal properties, and the value of the Croton Cascadeella has already been referred to. Smilax and rock samphire are found on most of the small cays, and many species of convolvuli, cultivated and wild, abound.

One of the simplest but most attractive wild flowers is the creeper which bears the white *Christmas flower*. These begin to open three or four weeks before Christmas, and the children of a simpler generation strongly believed in the story that all who picked these flowers before Christmas eve were sure to be forgotten by Santa Claus.

The following are the principal timber-trees of the Bahamas : *Mastic* (*Pistercia lenticus*) a

heavy and durable wood, much in demand for the frames and foundations of houses, and the timbers of ships. The engineer who built Fort Montague says ; "The mastic wood which the inhabitants delivered for palisades was as hard and heavy as iron. I was obliged to form them while the wood was green, for when they are fully dry there is no possibility of working them. The inhabitants affirmed to me that they would last above a century ; they are so hard that a musket ball makes no impression on them ; they assured me they were proof against swivel shot, but this I did not think proper to try." *

Mahogany. Whether or not this is the same as the wood locally called Madeira is uncertain ; the latter certainly gets its name from a similar tree that grows in Madeira, and it is undoubtedly of the mahogany species. It is durable but difficult to work.

Lignum Vitæ (Guaiacum sanctum). Is plentiful in the Crooked Island group. It, also, is hard and durable. Its leaves are used for scouring floors.

Cedar (Cedrela odorata). Much sought after for building material. The leaves and bark have a delicious odour, which assists their durability in keeping insects from the wood.

The *Black Ebony (Acacia Lebbek)*, *Green Ebony (Bryachenus)*, and *Mountain Ebony (Paullina tomentosa)* are all used for work which needs a hard, enduring wood.

* Bruce's Memoirs, p. 397. (This refers only to the heart of the mastic.)

Braziletto (*Calsalpinia crista*) Has a small, ovated leaf, and delicate twigs. It yields a scarlet dye and is valuable for export. It is now scarce ; but years before they were settled these islands were visited for this wood.

Bullet Wood (*Mimusops dissecta*) and the white bullet, or *Pigeon Wood* (*Diphelis salicifolia*) is valued on account of its qualities, sufficiently indicated by its name.

Dogwood (*Piscidia erythrina*) Hard and durable. Used for poisoning fish by surging the boughs or bruised bark in the water.

There is also *Logwood*, exported for the dye its gives, *Green* and *Yellow Fustic*, *Iron Wood*, *Bustic*, *Prince Wood*, *Yellow Wood*, *Box*, and the beautifully-veined *Naked Wood*, to all of which the Bahamian rocks seem to have imparted the qualities of hardness and slowness of growth. The *pines*, found only on a few of the western islands (*Pinus Bahamensis*) are used frequently for joists, keels, and other purposes, but are of no value as exports. The *Mangrove* is a remarkable shrub found on the sheltered shores of nearly all the islands ; where the water is shallow they thrive with great luxuriance, rising from their many ligneous roots which emerge above the earth's surface two or three feet before they unite and form the trunk. Thence several tough shoots spring, descend, and take root. As the tree increases in height they become more numerous, and are seen in great numbers depending, like brown ropes, not only from the trunk but from the higher branches.

The *Torch* or *Candle-wood*, has a strongly bitumenous quality, and was used for lighting purposes by the early settlers as a substitute for candles. It is useful to kindle a fire quickly. The wood of the *Cork tree* is used as a substitute for cork, in making floats, for instance ; it is of rapid growth and makes a pretty, decorative shrub. The *Manchineel* may be considered chief of the poisonous trees that grow in these parts. Eating crabs who have fed on its leaves generally has fatal results. It takes the skin off animals who rub against it, or when heated, lie under it. Its milky juice, dropped on the skin, burns like the poisoned shirt of Nessus. It is said to furnish the poison used in the mysterious bottles of the obeah men.

The *Fruits* of the Bahamas are characterized either by strongly protective rinds or large and abundant seeds—which seems to indicate that Nature is both desirous to protect them and to insure their propagation. Of the former sort the most striking is the *Cocoa-nut* (*Cocos nucifera*,) The nut is gathered in two stages, either green for its water and jelly, or in mature condition when the fruit is hard. A boy can generally be procured who will climb the tall branchless stem and throw or bring down the nuts. The trees flourish best near salt water or in a sandy soil ; they are very seldom cultivated and consequently the nut is too small to be valuable for export.

Of the many varieties of citrus fruits the *Shaddock* (*Citrus decumana*) is the largest ; the large ones are sometimes called pomeloes and the small forbidden fruit. The pulp is either

white or pink, and from the rind is made a pleasant preserve. The fruit derives its name from Captain Shaddock who first introduced it into the West Indies early in the Eighteenth Century. A fresh impetus has been given to the cultivation of *Grape fruit* (*Citrus racemosus*) by the demand for it in the American market because of its tonic properties. The fruit of the *Lemon* (*Citrus Limonum*) is refrigerant and antiscorbutic; oil of lemon is obtained from the peel. *Oranges* are plentiful during all the winter months; Andros and Eleuthera produce the largest and finest crops. *Limes* (*Citrus spinosissima*) are abundant and are much esteemed for their acid juice.

Citron, *Sour orange* (*Citrus amantium*) and *Bitter Sweet* (*Citrus Bigaradia*) are used for marmalade, candied peel, and in bitter tinctures. The *Mandarin* (*Plycosinis pentaphylla*), *Curacao orange*, *Golden apple*, *Orange apple* and *Nerolia flowers*—a native of South China, early cultivated in Persia—are all found in the Bahamas. All these species come originally from China, the East Indies and Malay archipelago; the acids of these fruits are medicinally used as refreshing laxatives and antiseptics.

The Pine Apple (*Ananassa sativa*) of family *Bromeliaceæ* is cultivated largely on all the islands where red soil is found; it came originally from Brazil. The fruit grows in the centre of long, spiky leaves of a yellowish hue; the plant being about the height of 18 inches. Of the same family is the familiar "Old man's beard" or Florida Moss.

The *Banana* (*Musa sapientium*) grows freely in the Bahamas; the trees are generally planted in rock holes, but the cultivation is limited by the quantity of good soil. It is a beautiful growth; the trees are often fifteen feet high with enormous light green leaves, six to ten feet long and often two feet broad, which, after they have been unfurled a few days, are generally split into ribands by the wind. From the centre of these leaves the stalk which bears the bananas extends. Akin to the banana is the *Plantain* (*Musa paradisiaca*), so called by the Christians of the East who thought it the forbidden fruit of Paradise.

The following is a list of the fruits subsidiary in importance to those above-mentioned; they are all grown with more or less care and assiduity in various parts of the colony.

Sapodillas (*Sapota acheas*.) A variety of the sapoteal family. Very abundant, with handsome glossy foliage. An inferior sort is found growing wild.

Soursops (*Anona muricata*). A large dark green fruit, white and soft inside when ripe, and of a peculiar acid flavour.

Custard Apples (*Anona reticulata*). The West Indian "Bullock's Heart." Much smaller than above, and less luscious.

Sugar Apples (*Anona squamosa*) sometimes called "sweet sop;" it has large leaves, grey and rough underneath, and purplish, variegated flowers that turn into a delicious fruit.

Mammee (*Mammea Americana*) It is a handsome tree with upright branches and large, dark, glossy leaves. The fruit has a sweet, pleasant flavour. The bark is a powerful astringent and the tree yields a yellow gum useful as a healing agent. The *Mammec Sapota* (*Lucuma mammosa*) is another of this family, and closely resembles the mammee but has a smaller fruit.

Guava (*Psidium Guava*) is a privet-like bush with small flowers which develop into round, yellow fruit, reddish inside and with innumerable seeds. It is largely preserved. The wild guava is also a plentiful and pretty shrub.

Cocoa Plum (*Chrysobalanus Icaca*) Never cultivated. It is indigenous and has two varieties of its fleshy fruit, purple and white. Makes an excellent preserve. There are also other sorts of wild plum such as the milk-berry, pigeon plum, darling plum.

Star Apples (*Chrysophyllum cainito*) The fruit resembles a green or purple peach, and obtains its name from the ten transverse sections into which it is divided; they are sweet and jelly-like. Its wild variety is called the Damson plum.

Rose Apple (*Jambosa vulgaris*) Has leaves like a myrtle and bright, flesh-coloured fruit. It is a native of India.

Hog Plum (*Spondias lutca*) grows on a large tree with gaunt, crooked branches and bunches of small, bright-green leaves. It is a deep yellow fruit, juicy and sweet. Sometimes called golden plum.

Scarlet Plum. The fruit appears before the leaves. The tree has wide-spreading branches, and sometimes reaches a considerable size.

Pomegranate (Punica Pranatium) Though the tree straggles the branches are always thin ; the leaves are small, flowers red, and fruit yellow ; but they cannot compare with the pomegranates of the Mediterranean coasts.

The *Mango* in these parts is a round-headed tree with rich, dark, laurel-like foliage ; but neither in size or fruitfulness can it compare with its relatives in India. It can only be seen at its best in the summer.

The *Sea Grape (Coccoloba uvifera)* abounds on the white, sandy soil of most of the islands. It is a hardy straggling bush, with oval leaves, and round purple berries (one variety bears white fruit.) The wood and the bark produce a strong astringent used in tanning.

Paw-Paw (Carica papaya) The grey bark of the tree bears a curious pattern, resembling stamped leather ; the leaves grow singly on long tubular branches. The large, light-green fruit has a flavour of apricots ; when half ripe they are pickled, and the leaves can be used as a substitute for soap. The juice contains a ferment similar to pepsin ; tough meat wrapped in the leaves speedily becomes tender.

The *Watermelon (Cucumis citrullus)*. *Musk Melon (Cucumis melo)*, and the *Cantelope* are cultivated on almost every patch of cleared land, and the first especially is in great demand in the summer months.

The *Cashew Nut* is a shrub with rounded, yellow-veined leaves and small green flowers ; these grow into a bright red pear, to the lower end of which hangs a kidney-shaped black bean. The pear is eaten, though it is very astringent ; in Jamaica the bean is also eaten when roasted.

The cultivated *Fig* of commerce (*Ficus carica*) grows on several islands, but the yearly crop of fruit is small and of an inferior quality. There is also the *Ficus partusa*, a native of Jamaica, and the wild fig (*F. trigonata*). The Spanish laurel is one of the fig family—a rather in elegant tribe—with a growth of roots hanging from its branches ; but its foliage is deep in colour and graceful in shape. A fine avenue of these trees stands behind the Nassau Library. It is probable that the so-called Banyan Tree, just outside Nassau to the east, is not the *Ficus Indica* but another species of fig. It has the same habit of growth as the banyan, and is a fine specimen whatever its exact species.

Other fruits are the *Akee*—a red fruit growing on a large tree ; *Date* ; *Mulberry*—the northern variety but evidently affected, both as to fruit and foliage, by the stronger sun of these latitudes ; *Cherry*—not at all like those of the Temperate zone ; *Gooseberry* ; *Pond Apple* ; *Seven-year Apple*—of the gardenia family, it takes eight months to ripen ; *Canepp*—grows in bunches, has a brittle shell covering an acid jelly ; and various *Grapes*, both wild and cultivated.

Peppers flourish in most gardens. The Cayenne or Bird Pepper, (*Capsicum frutescens*)

the Guinea Pepper, and Chillies are the principal varieties.

Of the *Vegetables* that grow on trees the *Bread Fruit* is the most striking. It is a large, awkward-boughed tree with deeply-cut leaves more than a foot wide. The fruit resembles large, corrugated, rough cannon-balls, the interior of which is hard and yellow. It has not a very distinct flavour even when cooked.

The *Avocado Pear* (*Persea gratissima*) sometimes called the Alligator Pear, and "Midshipman's Butter;" often grows into a great tree resembling a Spanish chestnut. When the large seed is removed and the rind peeled off the fruit is most refreshing, though it is not generally liked at first.

The *Sweet Potato* (*Iopmæa Batatas*) is one of the staple foods of the colony. It is the chief support of thousands amongst the poorer classes. *Yams*, (*Dioscorea sativa*), *Eddoes* (*Colocassia exulcula*) and *Cassava* (*Janifa manihot*) are three tuberous roots whose starchy qualities recommend them as food-stuffs. Some kinds of cassava are poisonous, and all are thoroughly boiled before being made into bread. There is also the *Arrow-root*, (*Maranta*) branching, broad-leaved canes with white flowers.

The *Sugar Cane* (*Sacchrum officinarum*) grown here, compared with that of the southern islands is fibrous, short-jointed, and deficient in sugar. Nevertheless it is universally used in its natural state, or boiled to make tea, or for the

manufacture of sugar and molasses ; but no export trade is done in the latter commodities.

The *Pumpkin* ; *Guinea Corn* (*Sorghum*) *vulgaris* ; *Pigeon Peas*, (*Cajanus Indicus*)—the dahl of India, it looks like young laburnum with purple flowers ; the *Squash* (*Cucurbita*) ; *Lima* or *Sugar Bean* (*Phaseolus lunatus*) ; and *Indian Corn* (*Lea Mais*) are grown in large or smaller quantities all over the colony, and are generally in use. These, and the tuberous roots before-mentioned, constitute the crops of “ground provisions” on which the life of the majority depends.

Coffee cannot be profitably grown here, though it is not unknown ; *Tobacco* is far too exhausting for the thin soil ; *Ginger* is not grown to any extent ; and the *Wild Pimento* or Spice tree is not encouraged by cultivation. The *Bottle-gourd* and the common *Gourd* furnish useful shells or “cocas” for bailing out boats, and so supply a local want—which, indeed, may be said of most Bahamian fruits and vegetable in the present stage of their cultivation ; more than this, in most cases, is not attempted.

CHAPTER XV.

SOIL AND AGRICULTURE.

Wide fragrant acres of *bromelia* rare
Growing to ripe perfection in their bed
Of good red earth so bountifully fed
By the warm agriculture of the air.

Sonnets of the Bahamas.

OCCUPYING, as the Bahamas do, so large an extent of ocean, partly within and partly on the borders of the Torrid zone, it might be expected that some marked differences would be found between the islands at the two extremities of the group. But this is not so. Strong characteristic resemblances in appearance, geological formation, and soil, as well as in the animal and vegetable kingdoms, unite them into one natural chain.

The detritus of the coralline sand and calcareous rock of which the Bahamas are formed is the basis of the different soils that are found here. They are of three sorts, commonly called, from their appearance, black, white, and red. The first is found exclusively on what seem to be the older islands, and—except in the case of those of a larger size—but rarely on the islands lying exposed to the open ocean; on the latter, white land is more often found. The black soil is

mainly vegetable mould and is excellent for most plants. In every crevice of the rock, but especially in the large pot-holes in which banana trees luxuriate, it is found in deposits of a greater or lesser depth and of varying degrees of fertility. The white soil is chiefly calcareous sand mixed with organic matter. Assisted by proper fertilizers it produces good crops of kitchen vegetables, but is not so well suited to fruit trees. The red, soil, as to its origin, presents an interesting and somewhat difficult question. Its presence is not easily accounted for. In the case of the Bermudas, where a somewhat similar earth is found, it is supposed to represent an elevated portion of the ocean-bed, which, in those parts, is of that character. It is not infrequently found here below the surface rock ; and sponges brought up from a considerable depth are not seldom found covered with this reddish clay, indicating the character of the ocean-bed in certain localities. It is evidently a sub-marine deposit, and analysis shows that its ruddy quality is due to the large percentage of oxide of iron it contains ; and it is this, in conjunction with the considerable proportion of nitrates found therein, that gives it such economic importance in the Bahamas as the best soil for pine-apples. It occurs in patches, which are of much greater extent in some islands than in others. In Eleuthera and Cat Island the area of red land is very large in the proportion to their size ; in New Providence it is very small ; while on other islands, as Inagua, for example, it is entirely lacking.

If the extent of Bahamian soil was only commensurate with its quality, these islands might

rival, in agricultural importance, their more fertile sisters of the south. But even in the more favoured islands, where deposits of black or red land are the most extensive, annoying outcrops of the bed-rock continually remind the farmer of his limited opportunities. The plough and the spade are significantly absent from the usual implements of agriculture in this colony. The latter is used occasionally but the former is comparatively rare. The hoe and the crowbar, the axe and the machete, are the most necessary tools. The planter's life in these parts is a constant struggle. Not that nature is utterly unkind, but she is coquettish ; she is not the reliable, large-bosomed matron that men have learned to depend upon in other lands. Though she spontaneously produces many curious and beautiful growths, she persistently refuses to resign herself to continued and productive cultivation. Heavy winds, frequent droughts, and soil so scanty as to become speedily exhausted, constantly discourage the farmer ; and the hardy but worthless native weeds and bushes persist in recovering possession of the soil which has been laboriously prepared for profitable crops.

Apart from hurricanes—the annual nightmare which haunts all interested in these regions—two grave questions are connected with Bahamian agriculture ; these are the influence of forest growth on rainfall, and the discovery and intelligent use of suitable fertilizers. There can be no question of the effect of trees upon climate, and it is unfortunately, beyond a doubt that their reckless destruction on many of these islands has seriously interfered with the rainfall

and the consequent productivity of the soil. In the Bahamas there are no rivers or fresh water lakes ; most of the rain which falls sinks into the porous rock, and the amount lost by evaporation is very great. The tendency of forests is to diminish evaporation, to render the temperature of the earth lower and more equable, and, generally, to preserve the quality of the land. The island of Abaco furnishes an example of the impoverishing influence of deforestation on the soil. Many years ago this island was largely covered with goodly timber trees—cedar, mastic, madeira, and many others ; but so thoughtlessly was the land cleared and burnt—often for no better reason than easily to make a way through the woods in hunting wild hogs—and so recklessly were trees cut down to find suitable timbers for ship-building, that the good forest land was mostly destroyed. The result is that a growth of worthless pine trees has spread all over the island ; their seeds were no doubt in the soil from the time the island formed a part of Florida, and they sprang up as soon as the stronger growth was removed. Now, in their turn, they are being destroyed wholesale through the wicked carelessness or culpable neglect that causes frequent forest fires, and, as a consequence, the land has greatly deteriorated and the rainfall has enormously decreased. If the agricultural possibilities of the Bahamas are considered worth extending or even worth maintaining, the afforestation of the larger islands is a matter of practical and immediate importance.

The whole question in regard to the improvement of agriculture in this colony resolves

itself into the best means of increasing and maintaining the fertility of the soil. When a plot of land becomes exhausted, and crops can no longer be profitably grown there, it is the custom to let it lie fallow for a long period. Meantime the owner cultivates another plot which, later, he treats in the same way. This ancient and inconvenient method seriously handicaps Bahamian agriculture; the remedy for it is the careful and persevering use of suitable manures. The constituents of plant food which occur in smallest quantity in these soils are Nitrogen, Phosphorus, and Potassium. The seaweed that abounds on these shores contains all these elements, and, used in its natural state or when burnt, and its ashes applied to the soil will act as a valuable fertilizer. For many years cave-earth has been used on the land. This is composed of the excrement of bats mixed with calcareous matter from the rock; when used alone it is not of great value, but mixed with lime or potash—such as seaweed ash contains—it forms an excellent manure. An artificial fertilizer has for some time been in use in pine-apple growing. It is not, I believe, considered quite the best for the purpose, but the results obtained from it have been fairly satisfactory.

Great impetus was given to agriculture in the Bahamas by the immigration of the Loyalists who left the American colonies after the declaration of independence. Most of the islands at that time were almost virgin soil; compared with the lands they had left it was easy to clear and prepare them for cultivation, and the light vegetable mould was found apparently well

suited to cotton. Fourteen years after their arrival forty plantations, covering nearly three thousand acres and worked by over a thousand negroes, were found on Crooked Island alone, and the yield from Long Island and Exuma together was estimated for one year at over six hundred tons. The cotton used came chiefly from Georgia and was of the Persian variety, but Anguilla cotton was found to cost least labour. Then as now, however, injudicious firing and destruction of trees, which exposed the land to fierce winds, and incessant tillage which exhausted the soil, were serious drawbacks to success. The chenile insect made frequent ravages amongst the crops, and the red bug stained the cotton, until gradually the industry was abandoned. The growing of cotton has, however, never been entirely given up on the windward islands, and several attempts have been made to revive its culture during the last century, but it has not been possible to bring the enterprise up to a permanently successful and profitable stage.

The pine-apple was introduced into these islands by certain German refugees who settled here when Governor Woodes Rodgers had reduced the pirates, about 1720. Under his cruel successor, Governor Fitzwilliam, all these settlers forsook the place, after having stocked the colony with what has since become its most successful fruit. Pine-apple growing, since those unsettled days, has always been carried on in the Bahamas on a considerable scale. At one time the fruit from these islands had the field to itself, but Florida, Cuba, and Jamaica have,

latterly, been keen competitors, and owing to the better shipping facilities they possess, the Bahamas have lost ground. It may be said that is the only agricultural industry that is persistently and intelligently followed in this colony, and the results are obvious. By the aid of suitable manure, lands that were partly worn out have been brought back to a suitable condition for bearing further crops. In a very favourable year, such as 1891, as many as 665,332 dozen pine-apples were exported, to the value of £56,061. In other years the exports have fallen to about one half of this, but within these limits the industry has always taken a leading place locally. The hindrances to greater success are entirely confined to harvesting and shipping the fruit—considerations which fall naturally into the next chapter.

As well as pine-apple growing the culture of the orange is of very ancient date, for McKinnen refers to the orange blight as damaging the crops even in 1800. This is called the "scale insect" and is a great nuisance to planters, as it covers the oranges and turns them black, quite spoiling their appearance, injuring their flavour, and frequently ruining the trees. That success which is said always to succeed has never, in Bahamian orange growing, been maintained for more than two or three consecutive seasons. The frequent hurricanes that leave pine-apple fields comparatively uninjured utterly ruin such orange orchards as are found in the track of the storm. And it takes years to recover from the effects of a gale. It is, however, the idea that the industry is not worth

very much care or thoughtful effort which prevents the majority of orange planters from making a study of the needs and habits of the trees and the best means of improving the fruit ; and this carelessness and want of intelligent perseverance reacts injuriously upon the enterprise. Occasionally, when frosts have destroyed the Florida crops, a new impetus has been given to the industry by better prices ; but there is always the fatal embargo of American customs duties to discourage Bahamian growers, notwithstanding the fact that the black coppice land found on most of the islands is admirably suited to orange culture. The growing of grapefruit has recently become profitable by reason of the demand which has arisen in the American market on account of its tonic properties. The hindrances that limit successful orange growing are felt in this industry also, and the competition of other countries is yearly becoming keener ; but the Bahamas have good stock and suitable land, and with care, should command high prices as long as the demand continues.

There is a considerable local demand for bananas—which often exceeds the supply—and some export trade in the fruit, both of which, with care and perseverance, might be extended. But it is not likely that this industry on a large scale will ever be successful in the Bahamas. This is owing to the absence of large tracts of fertile and sheltered land ; the rock holes in which the plants luxuriate are not sufficiently numerous to supply this defect. Moreover, the extensive and well-established banana trade of Jamaica and Cuba constitutes a competition

against which this colony can do but little. Somewhat the same may be said of cocoa-nut growing. This has evidently received considerable attention here in former years, but the export trade is unsatisfactory. It is due, no doubt, to the small size of the nuts and the little demand that exists for them compared with the larger and more attractive nuts obtained from Central and Southern America. The almost total absence of extensive sandy beaches with good sub-soil, the usually shallow surface soils on coral rock that obtain throughout the greater part of the colony, and the periodical exposure to hurricanes, are all factors that operate against the successful planting of large cocoa-nut groves.

For many years the successive Governors of the Bahamas have been empirical agriculturists of varying ardour, each advocating a different industry. Most of the important products of a sub-tropical climate have, in turn, had their exponents. But the gubernatorial terms are usually short, and it comes to pass that no sooner is one experiment in sight of such a completion as will fairly test its value than another is urged upon the public as being well worth making. Only rarely does one governor take up the parable of his predecessor. And so it generally happens that but little consecutive and well-considered effort is given to any particular enterprise, unless, on its first trial, it promises adequate and easily-won returns. Most of the islands illustrate the development of these various experiments, and in many cases, the loss that followed their abandonment. It is to be regretted that so many of these well-meant efforts have

been but languidly seconded by the people most intimately concerned, and that so little hopeful foresight and intelligent perseverance has been brought to bear upon the revival of old agricultural pursuits and the initiation of new enterprises. But, on the whole, the colony has been fortunate in having had frequently pointed out to it its possible industries and latent resources, and the unwisdom of putting all its eggs into one basket.

Apart from the financial intoxication induced by the large sums of money so rapidly and romantically made in the blockade-running days, whose evil result is a distaste for regular habits of patient industry, the agriculture of the Bahamas suffers from the fact that the majority of its inhabitants have fallen under the spell of the sea. The Buccaneer strain is more powerful than that of the Loyalists farmers; the seafaring tendency has more than overcome any inherited agricultural instincts; the Bahamian likes better to haul on the halyards, to trim the sheets, or to hold the tiller than to plod at the plough tail or bend over the hoe. Both climate and circumstances make it pleasanter to lounge on a vessel's deck and watch the swift waves curl back from the leaping prow, than to experiment with manures or to wage relentless warfare against persistent weeds. Though the roving life of the wrecker has been almost given up, the instinct seems ineradicable from Bahamian blood, and its effects are seen in a strong distate for a laborious life on shore. So the land is neglected to a lamentable extent; far too many go sponging, fishing and turtling; and more money made in these

occupations, with large and impecunious intervals between voyages, is preferred to less money made more regularly and certainly by farming, and at much less risk and discomfort. Ship-building and sea-faring in various forms—despite small freights and a growing disuse of sailing craft, which are being displaced by the swifter and more certain steamer—seems to possess an irresistible charm for the men of these coral islands ; and the longer one shares in their life, spent, of necessity, so largely on the ocean, the more one appreciates their point of view and sympathises with though one cannot but regret it.

There is still much truth in the verdict of one who knew the Bahamas fairly well a hundred and fifty years ago. He says : “ In short it is their own fault if the inhabitants want any of the necessities of life ; they have horses, cows, sheep, goats, hogs, and all sorts of poultry, and have grass all the year round ; but they neither sow nor plant more than is necessary for maintaining their own families ; whereby one of the most fertile parts of our West Indies is neglected for want of cultivation. They depend on their cargoes of salt, mahogany plank, dyeing wood, tortoises, fruit, etc., which they sell to great advantage ; and likewise upon the shipwrecks which happen frequently upon these extensive banks ; all of which make them careless in improving the natural produce of that fertile country which, were it once well peopled, would soon be in a flourishing condition.”* Many of

* Bruce's Memoirs, p. 425.

185 SKETCHES OF SUMMERLAND.

the facts contained in this extract are now erroneous—the want of population, the large flocks, and the abundance of grass are matters of ancient history ; but the writer's conclusions indicate that tendency on the part of the inhabitants which even necessity—stern mother of invention and nurse of industry—has done so little to turn into other channels.

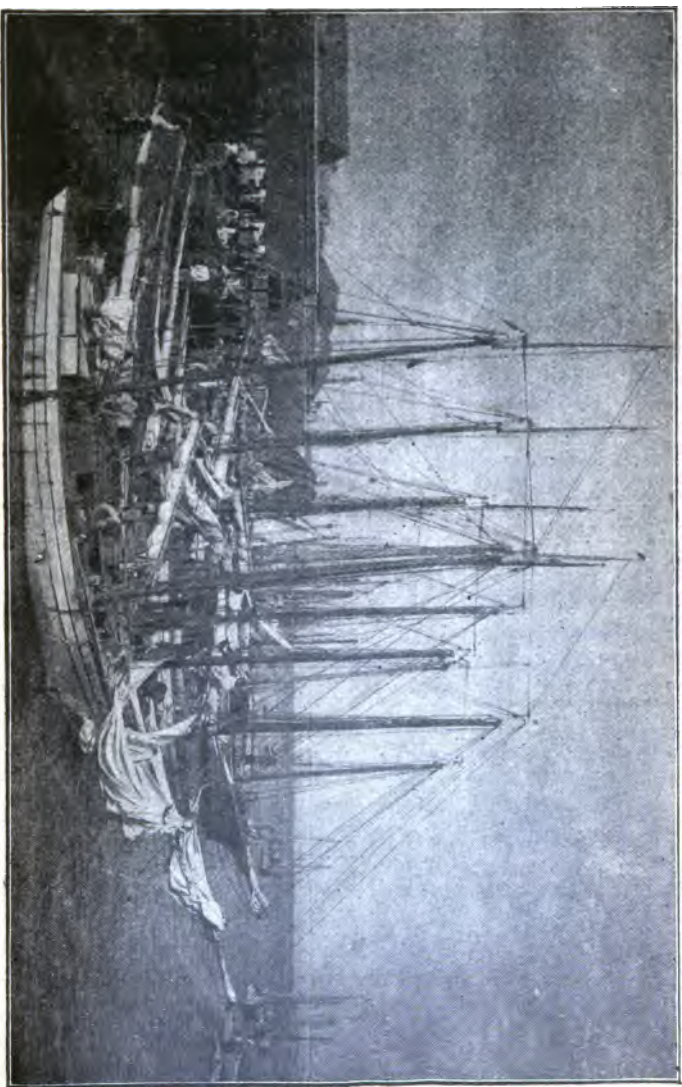
CHAPTER XVI.

INDUSTRIES AND EXPORTS OF THE COLONY.

Of all the names of patron saints who blest
The human race, I count among the best
Old Father Neptune—you may take the rest !
While he has charge of these Bahamian cays,
Gives sponge and fish and oft a favouring breeze,
I have no fear of earthly enemies !

The Sponger's Soliloquy.

SINCE the discovery of the West Indian fisheries, early in the last century, sponging has been the principal industry of the Bahamas. The chief fishing grounds are on the Great and Little Bahama Banks, and lie to the west of Andros and to the west of Abaco. In the Bight of Acklin's and on the Caicos Banks large quantities of sponge are also found. Schooners and sloops of from three to thirty tons are the vessels employed, and the sponge is dragged from its ocean bed by a "hook" of iron, double-pronged, fixed to the end of a long pole of yellow pine. A "water-glass" is used to discover the zoophyte lying below the waves. This is a simple but useful contrivance consisting of a wooden bucket with the bottom knocked out and thick glass substituted. When placed an inch or two below the water it shows the sea floor



SPONGE FLEET.

with great clearness. Leaning over the gunwale of his dinghy, with his mate standing in the stern ready to skull at his direction, the sponger spends the hours from sunrise to sunset peering through his glass and dexterously using his pole. Each vessel when going on "The Mud"—as the Andros sponging ground is called—takes twice as many men as she has dinghies, and an odd man as cook. One man alone can manage his boat on the Abaco sponging ground, as it is more sheltered. The voyages last from five to eight weeks. The catch varies according to the skill of the "hookers" and the state of the weather. Heavy winds, which make the bottom muddy, sometimes prevent sponging for weeks, and a continuation of bad weather means a "broken trip."

Sponging is an arduous occupation. It develops great strength in the arms and shoulders, but is not conducive to a long life. The strain of bending over the side of the boat and peering through the sunlit water to the dazzling bottom, is very severe alike on eyes and chest. Constant exposure and poor food increase the discomforts of the voyage, though the splendid sea air acts as an invigorating tonic. The men take great pride in their vessels and keen rivalry exists as to the merits of their respective crafts. Larger vessels are being used now than formerly, which enables the men to be more comfortable during their long and laborious absences from home. But the industry is overcrowded, and in face of the host of fishermen it is wonderful how the supply of sponge keeps up. It is said to be practically inexhaustible, and it is to

be hoped that time will not prove the fallacy of this supposition.

The voyage is undertaken on shares. The owner generally receives one third of the net profits and the rest is divided between the captain and crew. The stores are a charge against the gross proceeds of the trip and are usually furnished by the owner ; the men find for themselves any small luxuries such as tobacco and sugar. The amount which the individual sponger receives varies according to the skill and diligence of the crew, the energy and wisdom of the captain, the kind of weather they have, and the state of the market when they reach port. An Abaco schooner of sixteen tons shared, some years ago, nearly ten pounds a man after a voyage of eight weeks. But this is an exceptional case. She had remarkably good weather, a first class crew, and found a splendid market. Sometimes the share only amounts to a few shillings, and is more than swallowed up by the sponger's indebtedness to the owner for goods supplied to his family during his absence. When the trip is completed the cargo is sold at Nassau, on the Sponge Exchange, by tender to the highest bidder. The sales are conducted according to certain recognised rules. There are usually from sixteen to twenty buyers present who are, with a few exceptions, the local representatives of houses in New York, London, Paris and other places. They buy on commission, and the competition among them being usually keen, each lot put up for sale generally brings full value. After the sale the sponges are carted to the warehouses of the

several purchasers where they are trimmed into shape, dried and bleached in the sun, sorted, and then packed into bales weighing from twenty to one hundred pounds each. In 1898 £97,512 worth of sponge was exported from the Bahamas being an increase of £7,401 on the previous year. In the following year it fell to £84,003.

The fruit trade of the Bahamas stands next in importance to the sponge industry, and, apart from all questions of climate and culture, is kept in this secondary position by two serious, hindrances. One only is of local origin, the other has reference to the American market. For many years the fruit growers of these islands have been neglecting their own interests in the matter of preparing, packing, and shipping their crops. Not realising how much depends on the state and appearance of the fruit when brought to the purchaser—that, in fact, most people will give more for an inferior article tastefully presented than for a better one in a crude, unpleasing condition—the Bahamian exporter, as a rule, cuts small and undeveloped pine-apples, pulls his oranges from the trees instead of cutting the stalk, and ships both in bulk as though they were of no more perishable nature than a cargo of coal. A few years ago, under the auspices of the then Governor, an English official, eminent in the Royal Agricultural Department, visited the colony and gave lectures at the principal islands on the possibilities of enlarging the fruit exports and establishing other industries on a sound and permanent basis. He condemned most strongly the method of shipping then in vogue, quoting the opinion of American fruit

merchants against it, and showing that by this neglect the produce of these islands was deliberately keeping itself in an inferior position in foreign markets. He advised the bringing of a practical instructor from Florida who should tour among the islands and give illustrations of the best methods of growing and shipping, especially citrus fruits and vegetables, for the American market. Except, perhaps in the matter of packing, the pine-apple industry is in a more highly developed condition than any other. The hints and illustrations of this instructor have probably borne some fruit. But it is not easy to convince people that even the carelessness that has become sanctified by custom is not the best possible quality in agricultural matters. Even now, notwithstanding the warnings of those who know, that such methods are fatal to all hope of establishing a reputation for Bahamian fruit, many frankly confess that it is "too much trouble" to crate their pine-apples and to grade, wrap, and pack their oranges.

But the most serious drawback to the Bahamas fruit trade is the import duties of the States. As America has developed and enforced her protective tariff, oranges and pine-apples have become increasingly profitless to the Bahamian producer; and it is this that has killed the salt industry of these islands. There is a duty of six cents per bushel on salt, seven dollars per thousand on pine-apples in bulk, and a cent per lb. on oranges. The fruit duties are imposed on the whole cargo in whatever condition it may reach port. The bulk may have rotted on the voyage if the vessel has had a long calm trip or

strong head-winds. Then the consignee may refuse to claim them as they will probably not bring enough to pay the thirty per cent. of their invoice value. Under some more equitable arrangement they could be sold for what they will bring, and the grower, as well as the American consignee, and the Receiver of Customs, would all receive something from the cargo. Whatever may be said for the political value of this protective policy, as touching the Bahamas it certainly appears to be economically unsound. Quite three quarters of the trade of the Bahamas is with the United States, and by crushing Bahamian industries through excessive import duties they are killing their capacity to import American goods. Most of the money spent by Bahamians abroad finds its way again to the bankers of the States. Nearly all the vessels employed in pine-apple shipping fly the stars-and-stripes, and are glad to obtain such cargoes at a particularly slack season of the year. These considerations help to show the hardship under which the colony labours, and emphasise the axiom that American protection means Bahamian poverty.

During the last ten years an entirely new item has appeared in the annual list of Bahamian exports. This is sisal-hemp, the product of the Pita plant, (*Agave rigida*, var. *sisalana*) a robust, wide-spreading, cactus-like growth, with long, straight, dark green leaves terminating in a sharp, black spine. It was introduced into these islands from Yucatan in 1845 by Mr. C. R. Nesbitt, a former Colonial Secretary. Six years afterwards he extracted fibre from some of the leaves and placed samples in the Nassau

Museum, sending some to London also, whence he received an excellent report as to its value. The plants were plentiful on many islands forty years ago, and were recognised as containing a valuable fibre ; but the difficulty was to obtain means to extract it in a satisfactory and remunerative manner. Attempts were made under several successive Governors to create an export trade in sisal-hemp, but it was left for Sir Ambrose Shea, in 1887 to realise the hopes and reap the fruit of his predecessors' experiments. He found the plant popularly regarded as a useless and ineradicable weed which hindered agriculture, but his sagacity and energy gradually overbore all indifference and gained many converts to his views. Several English capitalists embarked in the industry, and many local land-owners began to grow the pita plant systematically. To encourage the industry the Legislature passed an Act giving a bounty of a cent per pound on all fibre exported during the next seven years. A commissioner was despatched to Yucatan to investigate the fibre industry in that country. His report showed the superiority both of the plant growing and the land to be obtained in the Bahamas. One statement made in his report, viz : " that any land that is shallow, impoverished, and will grow nothing else suits it ; in fact, it is an air-plant, requiring the ground only to hold it up "—was soon discovered to be incorrect, but not before the experience had been bought at a very high price. Owing to this misunderstanding large plantations have had to be abandoned, because the plant cannot be profitably grown on pine-barren or swampy land. What is locally termed " coppice land "

has been found to be most suitable for the purpose ; and it is greatly to be regretted that the pioneers of this industry paid so heavily for the experience of which their successors are now reaping the benefit, and for the plants, which, in some cases, they are now manufacturing into fibre at a satisfactory profit.

Notwithstanding these failures the hemp industry has proved of immense benefit to the colony during the last decade, and it now holds an assured place among Bahamian exports. Several companies are now at work on different islands, cleaning leaf and shipping hemp as rapidly as possible, and employing some hundreds of labourers. During the Spanish-American war the operations against the Philippines shut Manila fibre out of the market and caused Bahama hemp to rise considerably in value. The expenses of clearing the land, planting, weeding, and cleaning the leaf have now been reduced to a minimum, and greatly improved machinery is in use, so that the hemp can now be sold in New York at a price which gives a fair profit to the manufacturer even if it falls as low as £16 a ton. At present it is bringing much more. The quantity shipped in 1900 realized £17,000 and subsequent shipments have been much the largest and most remunerative yet made.

Not only does this industry afford a sound investment to the capitalist, it also gives employment to a large number of poor people working independently. On Cat Island, for example, hundreds of acres, belonging to various peasant proprietors, are growing the pita plant,

from which the leaves are cut as they become fit, then carried to the sea, tied in bundles and anchored in the water to soak. After some days they are taken out, macerated on the rocks till the fibre is freed from the refuse; then it is washed and dried, tied into bundles and sold for five cents a pound. It is either sent to Nassau or disposed of on the spot to the agent of some company. Whole families, parents and children together, working in this way, manage to augment considerably their scanty income.

Though sponge, pine-apples, and hemp are the chief articles of export from the Bahamas there are several others which help to swell the colonial revenue and give employment to large numbers of people. Turtling is an industry of some importance, though subject to considerable fluctuations. Some hundreds of Green Turtle are shipped to America, and a large quantity of the shell of the Hawksbill. The latter was exported to the value of £4391 in 1900. Turtle shell brings, usually, not less than twenty shillings (five dollars) a pound. They are found in large quantities about the Caicos banks. Many spongers turn to this when their own business is dull, and *vice versa*. The turtle is either captured in a "bully"—a conical-shaped net, fixed to a weighted hoop—or "pegged" with a harpoon or "flying peg." The former is dexterously dropped over the creature as he lies on the sandy bottom, and the latter are thrown from the boat, the stick to which they are appended being dropped and the line to which the peg is attached held firmly in the hand. The "bully" results in the more certain

and painless capture and leaves the shell uninjured.

Fishing, also, is an industry of considerable local importance, though it does not assist the exports. Many smacks, on which are employed some hundreds of fishermen, sail out from New Providence and three or four Abaco and Eleuthera settlements, and by them the Nassau market is kept abundantly supplied. Though not so profitable it is also not so arduous an occupation as sponging. From Cherokee Sound, an Abaco fishing village, was sold in 1901 £2800 worth of fish at the Nassau market; this represents a fair average of the yearly catch made by the men of that settlement.

An attempt was made by an American company to start a business in the curing of fish and *beche de mer*. They fixed their headquarters on a cay near Andros, and hoped that some of the excellent table fish of these waters might soon be found to have a more than local value.

While the subject of the minor maritime industries is under review mention should be made of conch pearls as articles of export. Their sale is rarely entered in official returns, but there is no doubt that considerable sums of money are occasionally made in this way. The difficulty is to find them flawless. Perfect shape, round or oval—but oval for choice—deep and even colouring, purity of pinkness, and the presence of regular “waves,” are indispensable requisites of a first class stone; if, in addition the pearl is large, it is certain to bring a high price at any

time. The age and condition of the conch, and the moment at which the stone is found, help to decide the good or ill-fortune of the finder. Sometimes the pearl, like the surrounding shell, is old and worn, or young and but partially formed; or it may have such intrinsic defects as render it of little value. Thus it will be seen that the Bahamas pearl fishery is but a capricious industry, hardly worthy, indeed, to bear so serious a name, as no one devotes himself continuously to its pursuit. Hundreds of pounds have been spent and millions of conchs broken open in the search for pearls, with a most inadequate return; while a chance conch, dived up for fishing bait, has not seldom yielded a huge and speedy profit, most often spent as easily and quickly as acquired.

Salt was one of the chief exports of the Bahamas some years ago, but the industry has fallen on evil days, chiefly due to the excessive import duty of the United States. This has led to the neglect of the ponds and the consequent deterioration of the quality of the salt, which has reacted injuriously upon the trade. This, next to cotton growing, was formerly the chief industry of the windward islands, but two years ago only £478 worth was exported. On the island of Inagua, for example, the salt ponds are one of the chief features of the place. Hundreds of acres of low-lying land have been divided into "pans" separated from each other by narrow banks. They are filled with water from a deep central ditch running out to the sea. The quantity is regulated by sluices, opened or closed as the proprietors wish. They let the

water in, the sun does the rest. But not quite all. From the almost still surface of the pans the sun draws off the water, leaving the salt behind. Then it is raked into brownish, glittering heaps, carted into town and piled upon the rocks. Here again the fierce but kindly sun dries and bleaches it and renders it fit for export. It is shipped to the American or Canadian fish-curing establishments, and is largely used in local kitchens. Two hundred acres of salt pond are capable of yielding, in favourable seasons, at least 1,500,000 bushels of salt annually. Now, owing to low prices and competition with the Turks Islands and other better salt-producing places the Inagua ponds are but little worked.

A large trade is done in Nassau in the preserving of pine-apples, guavas, and cocoa-plums; and there are also factories on Eleuthera. Some years ago an experiment was made in extracting from the juice of the pine-apple a digestive ferment called Bromelin. A shipment of several hundred pounds, produced from the juice of ninety thousand pine-apples, was made; but the experiment did not blossom into an industry. It was prepared to be used in the manufacture of artificially digested beef food. The drying of bananas, also, seemed, at one time, to promise an additional export to the colony; but nothing came of the proposal. In directions such as these, however, future good fortune may lie.

The exporting of timber, bark, and dye-woods, though still considerable, is inevitably decreasing as the supply becomes smaller; nor is there any likelihood of its ever becoming

large again. The virgin woodlands, once destroyed, can never be replaced. In 1742 the following might truly be said of the Bahamas : " All these islands are covered over with wood, as indeed, is all America, but with this essential difference, that here the trees themselves sufficiently pay the labour of cutting them down, exclusive of the benefit which results from clearing a fertile soil."* It may be said that to-day the exact opposite is equally true ; the best trees have nearly all been cut down and the profit which resulted from their use or sale has been more than counterbalanced by the injury done the land through deforestation. However, brazilletto, lignumvitæ, logwood, mahogany, ebony (occasionally), cedar, madeira, sabica, and satinwood, are exported to the value of some £2000 annually. Of barks the principal are the wild cinnamon or Canella Alba, and the Cascarella. Of the former Bruce says : " It grows in such abundance that between sixty and seventy tons was annually exported to Curacoa and the other Dutch settlements, where it is made use of in distilling cinnamon waters."† This writer also mentions the *cortex winterania*, another sweet-scented bark, also exported to the Dutch settlements and thence transported to the Levant where it was used by the Turks in the manufacture of perfumes and incense. But this is not found in the export lists of to-day.

* Bruce's Memoirs, p. 422.

† Bruce's Memoirs, p. 423.



ALPHABETICAL LIST OF THE PRINCIPAL EXPORTS

ARTICLES.	1891	1892	1893	1894
BARK—Cascarella lbs	53160	119180	51172	61251
val.	£405	921	299	544
BAHAMA HEMP lbs.	21050	68352	117430	174072
val.	£149	69	1200	1728
COTTON lbs.	56273	95367	101236	65658
val.	£927	1583	1677	907
FRUITS & VEGETABLES*				
Avocado peers no.	8870	8050	crt. 125	2350
val.	£15	14	12	10
Bananas, bunches.	1420	8966	2924	3121
val.	£197	432	122	137
Cocoanuts no.	28166	40550	44550	10089
val.	£112	111	56	42
Grape fruit no.	178994	161051	67400	101100
val.	£314	267	98	193
Mangoes no		91500	bbls. 48	6680
val.	£9	156	12	11
Oranges, China no.	2125097	3082870	1097100	675619
val.	£2253	3025	1085	580
Oranges, Seville no.	30500	1200	6000	..
val.	£30	1	3	..
Pineapples dozen	510408	665332	472960	569832
val.	£45966	56061	39386	42568
Pumpkins no.	2425	1480	6780	3480
val.	£4	12	39	24
Sappodillas no.	90600	63600	58460	29400
val.	£45	30	33	19
Tomatoes crates	..	..	..	..
val.	..	..	..	..

* Limes, Lemons, and other mixed fruits are occasionally exported but to a very small extent.

OF THE BAHAMAS DURING THE LAST TEN YEARS.

1895	1896	1897	1898	1899	1900
114686	186612	114910	124217	97712	85410
1066	1922	1164	1540	963	887
534544	970766	901787	1251726	1358682	1276037
3987	5389	4522	14710	16942	16246
42461	30583	4371	10782	123	..
289	423	76	143	498	..
12751	5250	3600	2627	10625	600
36	13	6	44	52	2
3960	680	1563	950	425	465
137	22	47	26	17	14
18421	39905	42851	42355	21375	3050
56	102	111	133	74	12
226169	291380	622981	215239	87799	300905
687	1240	3308	1988	401	744
16400	17813	..	17165	20250	64400
12	16	..	131	176	11
4492981	1828522	2544399	2258478	482628	1264057
4908	2785	3398	3061	1199	2033
23012	73600	17851	..	..	..
26	33	41	..	..	..
416507	332269	404855	349802	3988973	7233012
22784	16490	24581	24360	28315	59191
1935	3900	2860	1165	1075	3950
14	30	27	10	18	34
50900	43014	48350	105800	61300	43944
57	19	27	19	33	7
853	4532	636	223	173	1295
66	304	38	54	43	283

ARTICLES.		1891	1892	1893	1894
Shaddocks	no	2500	..	..	..
	val.	£7	..	..	..
HIDES (raw)	no.	7209	9962	7410	4558
	val.	£257	360	246	87
PRESERVED FRUITS.					
Guavas	cases.	614	450	100	300
	val.	£249	243	33	446
Pineapples	cases.	10919	16929	13756	15397
	val.	£3793	3425	2467	3022
SALT.	bushels.	146578	120130	176515	156688
	val.	£1705	1978	2068	1717
SHELLS conch *	no.	106682	50245	97273	49434
	val.	£187	165	197	83
Shells small	pkgs. bls.	746	562	559	845
	val.	£413	410	437	492
SPONGE	lbs.	1105974	1132599	945612	1000928
	val.	£58682	65544	58618	59155
TURTLE.	no.	2065	983	1382	1719
	val.	£1017	610	862	656
Turtle shell	lbs.	11026	5543	5462	7343
	val.	£6847	3832	4158	7310
WOODS—					
Braziletto	tons.	..	..	21	42
	val.	..	..	42	77
Lignumvitæ	tons.	375	38	130	74
	val.	£838	79	413	164
Logwood	tons.	473	967	466	201
	val.	£1720	3507	1554	635
Mahogany	logs.	11	30	92	12
	val.	£30	50	119	21
Sabica	tons.	lgs. 426	tns. 123	105	76
	val.	157	159	265	152
TOTAL VALUE OF EXPORTS.. £		128010	145136	117021	119378

* Shell-work and marine curiosities are exported, to the value of a few score pounds every year; both are decreasing.

1895	1896	1897	1898	1899	1900
2830	500	8040	1150	..	124
14	6	63	4	..	3
4814	2743	954	2889	347	8788
233	259	243	598	121	278
177	235	350	250	150	4059
178	235	159	250	150	1332
24531	28118	21110	35629	33154	37854
4681	6240	3979	5347	5691	7004
25708	123458	99496	48400	37306	8257
485	917	429	800	486	478
72656	45579	92760	64626	70962	41984
274	154	446	411	438	410
469	589	523	bbbs.707	1342	850
492	598	429	295	558	1166
1081060	1529865	1228047	1207683	1124685	1165406
67565	81091	90111	97512	84033	104219
lb 25068	lb 26941	lb 14691	lb 3878	lb 32278	lb 18132
428	450	267	254	487	221
9036	16789	8306	8795	12885	6904
7093	7541	5541	7278	10039	4391
40	29	21	..	..	..
62	42	63	..	..	..
336	141	181	175	159	299
674	312	308	371	320	422
38	634	43	..	648	313
71	2073	109	..	1409	427
309	48	170	125	427	36
1827	79	281	94	1269	67
222	45	331	558	1167	533
244	20	201	309	536	267
119456	129307	141445	159919	154268	200149

It is interesting to compare with the foregoing table the following statement concerning the Exports of the Bahamas over 120 years ago." "Like most other portions of the prosperous Empire of which it forms a part, Nassau has had reason of late years to boast of an increasing commerce, in proof of which it is said that while the exports in 1773 and 1774 amounted only to £5216, and the imports during the same period to £3592 ; in 1786 and 1787 the former were augmented to £58707 and the latter to £136,359, exclusive of a great deal of bullion, of which no account was kept."

(Edward's West Indies—McKinnen's Appendix—Vol IV.
p. 379.)

CHAPTER XVII.

THE OUT ISLANDS.

HERE simple lives in isolation spent,
Alternate toil and harmless merriment,
From font to funeral pass in calm content.

Bahamian Ballads and Rhymes.

UNDER this euphemism are described all the islands other than New Providence. To those who live in the capital the colony consists of "Nassau and the Out Islands." It is a useful and expressive term, though by metropolitan lips it is often uttered with an amusing tone of pity. The fact that the whole group is very much "out island," geographically and otherwise, is forgotten—being naturally overshadowed by the relative importance of the bright little city that focusses the life of the colony. But the ladder by which one has climbed to an eminence, however slight, should not be discarded too soon. The "out-islands"—about which an amazing ignorance exists in metropolitan circles—stand related to Nassau as the arteries do to the heart; the one cannot afford to despise the other, and each, from its point of view, can make good its claim to superior honour and con-

sideration. To know Nassau, is emphatically, *not* to know the Bahamas. Visitors ought to remember this ; and it is to be regretted that the majority of Nassauvians can give them so little information concerning the colony as a whole. If a few hundred of them—especially those interested in public affairs—would travel occasionally and stay for a few weeks at the islands that lie between Abaco and Inagua, it would do much to extend and solidify the social and commercial life of the colony ; it would induce, in varying degrees, pity, pride, astonishment and sympathy in many minds that lack these sentiments concerning local affairs ; and it would lead not only to better health and a wholesome contentment with the limited life even of the capital (such as some complain of), but also to sounder views of colonial policy and development.

Grand Bahama lies to the south of the Little Bahama Bank, and is the largest island opposite the mainland. It comprises about 275,200 acres. It was not permanently settled until about 1806, although annually resorted to by the wood-cutters of the other islands, for the fine timber with which it abounded. The soil along the seaboard is good, being "white land," and yields fair crops of corn. The interior is well adapted to grazing, fresh water being abundant. Large quantities of fish and turtle are to be found in the creeks and shoal water. The inhabitants are principally employed in agriculture, sponging and fishing. There are no good harbours along shore for large vessels, but with the wind off the land the anchorage is good, particularly at the west end.

Great and Little Abaco, with the adjacent cays, form the most northerly portion of the group. The area of the mainland is about 496,700 acres. It was settled principally by Loyalists in 1786. Most of the inhabitants live upon cays that lie a few miles from the mainland. One of these, Green Turtle Cay, was for many years the principal settlement, but its glory has now departed; partly through emigration, the failure of the pine-apple industry, and from other causes it has become greatly reduced; but its wide, well-made roads and good buildings—now mostly untenanted and falling into ruin—show what it was in the days of profitable wrecking and fruit growing. Many of its early settlers came from Harbour Island. Hope Town, on Little Guano Cay—where stands the Elbow Reef Lighthouse—is now the largest and most prosperous settlement. Several large schooners are owned here, and sail between Nassau and the ports of the Southern States; and a large number of sponging schooners give employment to the men of the place. Except in the hurricane season only a few elderly men and those whose occupation keeps them on shore are to be found, the others are “on the Mud” or “to the westward”—*i.e.*, on the Little Bahama Bank. The Abaco spongers are the most diligent and successful in the colony and contribute not a little to the prosperity of Nassau. Most of them are white men, though many coloured people, formerly engaged in pine-apple growing, have of late years taken to the sea; this is especially the case at Marsh Harbour, on the mainland. One of the principal centres of the local fishing trade is Cherokee Sound, lying also on the mainland

outside Little Harbour bar. At the southern extremity of Abaco stands Hole-in-the Wall Lighthouse—the western light that shows the way into the Providence Channel, the eastern beacon being on Egg Island. At Little Abaco and at the western part of Great Abaco are extensive sisal plantations, worked by English companies, which give employment to many labourers, and have a large annual out-put of Bahama hemp.

Though two of the smallest islands of the group, the *Biminis*—which lie on the western edge of the banks—are interesting by reason of their romantic history ; and as romance so persistently evades the present life of the colony they merit a somewhat longer notice than their area would seem to warrant. They lie on the border of the Gulf Stream, only forty miles from Florida. It is a land of few people and many cocoanuts, remarkable for nothing in particular but a past that is haunted by a legend. Heine sang about Bimini. Probably he never saw it. If one is a poet, it is not difficult to sing of that which the imagination has glorified.

Many years ago the glamour of Spanish credulity cast a halo of romance round these islands. Ponce de Leon, a Spanish adventurer, somehow became possessed of the belief that one of the Bahama Islands contained a wonderful fountain. It was said that its waters possessed peculiar rejuvenating properties. For many years he searched, until—so the story goes—an old Carib woman told him that this fountain of perpetual youth was to be found on South Bimini. But he is dead, drank he never

so deeply, and now the virtues of the magic water are heavily discounted.

Poe's lines are appropriate here in two ways—

“ Gaily bedight this gallant knight,
In sunshine and in shadow
Had journeyed long, singing a song,
In search of Eldorado.”

But the only “ Eldorado ” the people of Bimini know or speak of is not a marvellous fountain, but a large steamer of that name, wrecked off the coast some years ago, which brought each wrecker a substantial share of salvage money, and flooded the colony with goods originally intended for New Orleans. One such wreck is a more desirable “ Eldorado ” to the people of Bimini than fifty legendary fountains.

Still there seems to be some faith in the properties of the fabled water. It is used as a cure for rheumatism, and is said to be valuable in other complaints. I had only been on shore a few hours when I was urged to go and drink of it. Needless to say, I took the advice, perhaps hardly in the spirit in which it was given. I went—as to the Well of St. Keyne—I drank, and I brought away a bottle full of the water.

Concerning the situation of the fountain. It is simply a cavern in the rock, embowered in a little wood of pigeon-plum and gumalumœ trees. It is shaded, even at noon, and the sides are green with damp. Lizards scamper over the rocks and bask in the warm sunshine. Humming birds and doves and many active and

bright-coloured insects flit about. I regret to say that the dipper which dispenses the water of youth to this decrepit age is an outworn condensed-milk can. It is let down to the water by a long trailing vine of wild convolvulus ; and as it is withdrawn a strange gurgling rush of water is heard in the cool and quiet caverns underground. If this is not sufficiently unearthly, I should like to know what sort of a sign this prosaic generation wants? The water is refreshingly cool and quite tasteless—not a trace of Mr. Weller's "warm flat-iron" flavour. Ponce de Leon is remembered at Bimini by a little schooner named after him, locally called *The Punch*.

To many boys and girls at school, bored or interested, as the case may be, in the study of geography, the Gulf Stream is rather a vague and uncertain thing—a sort of aqueous tendency that makes for warmth. But to all who have had anything to do with it the Gulf Stream is real enough. It can be seen distinctly, its dark waves running strongly northward, beyond the bright green water that laps the western shore of North Bimini ; and as the vessels pass, helped or retarded by the current, a stone could often be thrown on to their decks. But its presence may be appreciated in another way. Coming from or going to Key West on a sailing vessel, if one is becalmed in the Gulf, a peculiar earthy odour will be noticed rising from the sea. It is the "bouquet" of the Gulf Stream ; it probably arises from the masses of earthy matter contributed to this ocean-river by the rivers of the continent.

Most of the Bimini men are spongers, but between their intermittent trips and during the hurricane months they make "shipboarding" their business. That is, they go out as pilots to the many vessels that pass north or south between Bimini and Florida. Frequently they take out vegetables, fish, turtle, fruit, or shells, to sell or exchange for food. But this occupation involves a lazy looking out for vessels that is destructive of all regular habits of work. Only a few men work on the land, though South Bimini is very fertile. Many have emigrated hence to Florida during the last few years. They have gone to sponge beneath the Stars-and-Stripes or to work in the City of Cigars.

Wrecks used to be abundant about this part of the colony, but are less frequent now. Most Bimini houses have gained by the loss of ships. A grating frequently does duty as a step, and beautiful maple-wood or walnut cabin doors stand in marked contrast with walls of plain pine. Decorated cornices, gilt mouldings, and handsome pieces of ship's furniture are found in many dwellings—even the Methodist Church is adorned with cabin-decorations. These things, and three of the most important Bahamian Lighthouses within a few miles of Bimini—are significant of a strange and stormy past which not a few would like to see repeated in the present.

Andros is the largest of the Bahama islands, having an extreme length of 90 miles ; its greatest breadth is about 40 miles. It is a low island, swampy and thickly wooded ; it is indented by

many mangrove-boarded creeks some of which lead to an extensive swampy lake that occupies a large part of the centre of the island. Madeira, mahogany, horse-flesh, mastic, lignum-vitæ, braziletto, and other woods have supplied ships frames and furnished a valuable export for many years. Oranges and cocoanuts are largely cultivated. Sisal was extensively grown till a few years ago, but private enterprise in this industry has somewhat lapsed and the largest plantation—in which the Rt. Hon. Joseph Chamberlain was interested—has been abandoned. The interior is said to be but partially explored, and abounds in many sorts of birds and a few species of wild animals. The principal settlements lie on the east side. In 1787 the inhabitants of the island of St. Andro, on the Mosquito Coast, were brought here at the expense of the government when their former home was ceded to Spain. The descendants of these people now form a portion of the population of Andros which consists almost entirely of coloured folk. A destructive hurricane recently swept over the island, causing much distress and considerable loss of life especially on the north-western shore.

Eleuthera. On account of its fertility and extent, this island and the two small islands—Harbour Island and St. George's—lying off its northern end, have been most extensively cultivated and largely settled.

Harbour Island is about a mile and a half square. A walk of seven miles over its winding beaches would complete its circumference. As seen from the opposite shore it presents a charm-

ing picture in the soft evening light. The wide piazzed houses, rising in terraces to the top of the gentle hill that forms the backbone of the island ; groups of casuarinas and clumps of waving cocoanut palms, making restful interludes of green amongst the variously painted dwellings ; the clean white streets, now less glaring than at noon ; three or four schooners and infinite small craft lying at anchor in the harbour, with white sails shining here and there on the sparkling waves ; the clean yellow sand and the grey rocks washed by the emerald sea, and the whole scene flooded with the glory of the sunset make an effective and interesting picture. The harbour is one of the best in the colony, and lies between the island and Eleuthera ; it is further enlarged and protected by two smaller islands lying to the north of Harbour Island, but its usefulness is much lessened by a narrow and difficult entrance channel. Round the north end of Eleuthera, from Current Point to Gun Point, lies the intricate and dangerous passage most vessels have to travel to and from Harbour Island. The bones of many a noble craft have bleached upon this coast ; not a few lives have been lost through ignorance or carelessness ; and there now stands, firmly wedged into the reef, not a quarter of a mile from the shore, the skeleton of the steamer *Cienfuegos*, in which visitors have sailed to Nassau in seasons past. Harbour Island was formerly a military post. Barracks Hill, a pretty undulating rise at the northern end of the town, occasionally discloses long-buried fragments of the old barracks. In these piping times of peace such a building is unnecessary. The town is named after John, Earl of Dunmore,

who became Governor of the Bahamas in 1786, and had a summer residence here. It is the largest and most pretentious place outside Nassau; and though of late its income has been considerably reduced, it still sails most of the larger vessels of the colony, several of which are owned there. But the demand for rapid transit, supplied by the ubiquitous steamer, makes it increasingly difficult for them to obtain freights. The scanty though fertile soil of Eleuthera does not yield crops of pine-apples as formerly. Much of the land is "worked out" the cultivators say; and the Bahamian growers keenly feel the competition of Cuba and Florida in the American markets. Most of the inhabitants cultivate fields and orchards on the opposite island of Eleuthera. This land was granted by the Government in 1782 to the loyal Harbour Islanders who assisted Colonel Deveaux to recapture Nassau from the Spaniards. There were then only about five hundred inhabitants on the Island. Their descendants now enjoy all the privileges of commonage, and an Act of the Legislature has recently defined the rights and responsibilities, of this joint ownership. So, in his little boat, the Harbour Island "man goeth forth to his work and to his labour until the evening." It is a pretty sight, in the bright, warm, early morning, to see the white sails set for "over yonder," and in the evening to watch them sailing home out of the wide splendour of the sunset. This is the ideal "going to business" and "coming from work," the greatest possible contrast to the noise and smell and hurry of the workmen's trains entering or leaving Liverpool Street, or the rush and smoke of the cars on the Elevated Road!

Spanish Wells. This settlement lies on a sandy little island called St. George's Cay which helps to form the western side of the narrow winding channel that leads outward to the ocean. Nearly all the inhabitants are white people, descendants of a hardy seafaring stock. Their little home was plundered and partly burnt by an American vessel during the war of 1812, and Spanish Wells, as its name indicates, probably saw stirring events in the days of the bold buccaneers. At least the island looks sufficiently peaceful now. Large groves of cocoa-nut palms give it a picturesque appearance, and fruit trees of many sorts flourish on its western side. They are an industrious folk who dwell there, equally successful on sea or land. No spongers or fishermen in the Bahamas make better voyages than the Spanish Wells men, and at every orange season and pine-apple cutting several cargoes are shipped from there.

It is unnecessary to describe all the Eleuthera settlements in detail, but a sketch of a typical orange growing village may be interesting as well as instructive. Such a place is found in *The Bluff*, lying about five miles from Spanish Wells on the western shore of Eleuthera. It was originally a settlement of liberated, slaves descendants of many who were once the property of neighbouring white planters. After freedom, with the practised eye of old agriculturists, they settled on some of the finest land in the colony, taking care to be near the sea for the convenience of shipping fruit and getting fish. They were joined from time to time by others, until it became a good-sized-village. Every winter hun-

dreds of thousands of oranges are shipped from the Bluff to Baltimore, Wilmington, Brunswick, and other southern ports, and until the Dingley Bill became law in the United States, the people used to do well—at least once a year. But with very few exceptions they are thriftless, and when each orange season comes round are in debt for goods procured at a high price over against their prospective crop. Then traders come, like birds of prey, and settle amongst them for a few weeks, and open their barrels of luscious pork and salted beef, and woo the little ones with candy, and display seductive ribbons and startling dress-goods, until the ladies in "the season" are dressed like Turner's sunsets. These goods are frequently not bought, but bartered for oranges, which leads to stealing from neighbour's lots, watching the fruit by night, "hard feelin's," family quarrels, and "cases" for the magistrate to settle. Then the last fruit is pulled, the spring comes on, and the sweet penetrating scent of the orange blossom floats over the buried splendour of "the season." Summer finds the girls and women busier than ever plaiting hats from palmetto leaves, at which they are very neat and quick. Two or three sloops sail to Nassau every week carrying field produce, mangoes, sugar-apples, avocado pears, and other fruit, with dozens of the palmetto hats. And so the lean months pass, the men working in the fields, weeding the orange lots, clearing new land and budding trees, until the winter, when The Bluff man becomes once more a person of importance—like the working man at an election, whose vote and interest are in great demand.

Here is another sketch of a settlement that combines agricultural and maritime interests in its efforts to assist both its own and the Colonial revenue. Though The Current has some features in common with Spanish Wells, it has several characteristics peculiar to itself. An unusual air of neatness and fair comfort, and an atmosphere of friendliness, greet the visitor. The people are always busy. Most of the men go smack-fishing, spending a few industrious days in the fields between each voyage. In the winter, when crowds of visitors from America flock to Nassau, and the hotels and boarding-houses are full, their finny cargoes are in great demand, and they make good voyages. In the pine-apple season, during May and June, several men from this place and from Current Island go out looking for American fruit-vessels, to pilot them to or from their ports of entry. They are adepts at this responsible work, as they thoroughly know the regions round about, and can work almost as well by night as day. They are excellent *raconteurs*. Many of them took an active part in running the blockade of the Southern ports in the early sixties. Several have spent years in Florida, and all know of wrecks, and sharks, sponging, piloting and all the changes and chances of a wandering life at sea, and can tell many interesting stories of their experiences afloat. But they are not exclusively a seafaring folk. Large quantities of oranges, grape fruit, and vegetables are grown at The Current; and the women and girls find a profitable employment in shell-work, at which they exhibit great cleverness and patience. Baskets, photograph-frames, imitation flowers, and nameless other

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designs are wrought out of different shells and fish scales, threaded on wire, with wonderful elegance and taste. At a very early age girls and boys become wage-earners; and here, as elsewhere in the Bahamas, the sea supplies most of the stock-in-trade. It is astonishing how many and what various marketable commodities the mighty deep contains, from sunken ships to the tiniest shells, from pearls to sponges; and the Bahamian, of necessity, tries hard to make money from them all.

Eleuthera is *the* pine-apple island of the Bahamas. Here is found in large quantities the good red land which that bromeliad loves; and most of the inhabitants are in some fashion interested in its culture. During the shipping season, from April to July, when many vessels lie off the shore waiting for their cargoes the usual quiet of the settlements is exchanged for a bustle that is almost business like. Traders of many sorts swoop down upon the villages, and open little stores in rented houses. The Syrian cheap jewellery-seller finds the change from Beyrout to the Bahamas a profitable one. The lady who makes bread and cakes for the hungry pine "toters," and the gentleman who displays the refuse finery of the Nassau tradesman, find themselves neighbours for the nonce. And somehow, somewhere, as the noise at night bears witness, *rum* is being sold, though it is probably illicit. Early in the morning crowds of men and boys, women and girls, begin to come in from the fields, bearing on their heads huge baskets full of pine-apples. On the rocks the tally-keepers sit, marking to the credit

of each bearer every dozen he or she "totes." Then the fruit is measured by a guage to see if it comes up to the required size of fourteen inches in circumference. From the shore the pines are lightered off to the vessels, where, as they go over the side, the quantity is again checked on behalf of shipper and the buyer. Cargoes in bulk are thus shipped, several thousand dozen at a time, to the States. At some places the fruit is packed in crates, and is thus less liable to be bruised. If the vessel has a long voyage, many hundreds rot; yet there are disadvantages about shipping by steamers; though their speed is greater, their holds are hot, which often leads to considerable rotting of the fruit. Or she may arrive with a sound cargo only to find the market glutted; yet the fruit must be sold. And these are not the only risks the shipper has to take. The prayer of the Bahamian pine-apple grower is that America will abandon her protection policy; and if an Anglo-American alliance would lead to such a step, it is "a consummation devoutly to be wished," for the sake, at least, of this poor little colony. For what with enormous import duties, dishonest fruit brokers, and high charters, the shipper's life is a burden to him. Droughts, long voyages, poor land, he can bear as the "act of God," but he is no match for Yankee politics and sharp-practice. With unimportant alterations this general description of an Eleuthera village in "the season" stands good for them all, but one or two places for various reasons, deserve individual mention. *Governor's Harbour* may be called the Capital of Pine-apple Country. Part of the town stands on a small rocky island called Cupid's Cay, which

is united to the mainland by a causeway flanked by an avenue of fine casuarinas. The cay is the older, the business portion of the place, and almost every available foot of land is occupied by stores, houses, and well made roads. The settlement on the mainland is of comparatively recent growth; the picturesque houses rise in tiers up the side of a green, well-wooded hill whence a pretty view may be had to seaward and inland over the wide acres of pine fields. At the foot nestles the snug harbour, the home of a fleet of swift bateaux—the favourite style of local craft—and just beyond lies the cay; the Churches and the new Library rise conspicuously above the mass of dwellings, the white streets gleam in the sunlight, and everywhere the signs of well-established trade and fair prosperity satisfy the eye. Riding, driving, cycling, and sailing occupy the leisure hours of the planters who all seem to recognise their debt to the good red land by giving it assiduous attention. *Tarpum Bay*, further up the shore, is another busy colony of cultivators, and *Rock Sound*—while showing signs of a former prosperity greater than that of recent years—also bears witness to its successful devotion to the soil. Other settlements extend to the extreme east end of the island, but they are, for the more part, small hamlets of coloured folk.

Cat Island is said to be one of the finest for agricultural purposes in the Bahamas. During the time of slavery there were some very fine estates scattered through the island, but now they are all in ruins, and only the mementoes of better days. Within the last few years pine-

apples and bananas have been cultivated with success, finding a ready market in the fruit ports of the United States. Cocoa-nuts have been extensively planted throughout the island, and it is to be hoped that the day is not far distant when this island will be restored to something like its former prosperity and wealth. The population in 1901 was 4648. The area is 102,400 acres. Its shape resembles somewhat that of a boot. Its extreme length is 42 miles, its average breadth four miles, and its extreme breadth from the toe, as it were, to the heel of the foot 14 miles. Thousands of acres have been destroyed by carelessness and improper cultivation. With facilities for raising quantities of cattle, very few are to be found, except on those estates where walls were erected during the time of slavery. At the abolition of slavery there were considerable tracts of Crown land on the island. The greater part of it has now, however, been purchased.

The Bight is the chief settlement. Here is a church, school, prison, and revenue office. Eight or ten miles east of Arthur's Town (the North End settlement), is Bennett's Harbour, where there is a salt-pond, which an unsuccessful attempt has been made to cultivate. The next settlement is the Bluff, which was formerly the wealthiest on the island. Between the Bluff and the Bight, about 30 miles, the people are all scattered in small settlements on private land engaged chiefly in the cultivation of corn and potatoes. There is a settlement at Devil's Point, and between this and Port Howe and Columbus Point the people are scattered in various small

villages. The land is excellent, and if the people were industrious and persevering, they would be amply repaid for any labour bestowed on it. At Port Howe is an estate formerly one of the best in the Bahamas, particularly for the raising of cattle and horses, great care having been taken in the improvement of the breed. Thorough-bred stallions were imported from England, and even at this day the blood is visible in the horses of San Salvador. It has now, however, become a picturesque wilderness. The inhabitants are all coloured people, descendants of those who were formerly slaves. An extensive sisal plantation owned by The Bahamas (Inagua) Sisal Plantation, Limited, near the Bight, gives employment to many labourers, and its luxuriance quite vindicates the boasted value of Cat Island soil.

Exuma. One writing of this island in 1783 says, "The soil upon the island of Exuma is equal in quality, if not better, than that upon any of the other islands, and it is better supplied with fresh water. A sufficient proof of this is, that scarcely a vacant spot is left on it but what is already settled, and by the most respectable part of the refugees from South Carolina, Georgia, and East Florida."* A long chain of cays stretches away to the north-west from Great Exuma, and Little Exuma lies to the south-east of it. Large quantities of cotton were grown here formerly, and it is still cultivated, though to a much smaller extent. Cattle and sheep flourish, pine-apples and sisal are grown, salt

* MS. Report of Lieut. John Wilson, in the Boston Public Library.

ponds are found on the smaller islands, and sponging employs several of the men. Lord Rolle owned large estates here long ago. It was he who insisted on appearing in person at the coronation of Queen Victoria, though he was so old and feeble that he stumbled on the steps of the throne, and Her Majesty rose to save him the trouble of coming further. He gave his land to his slaves and their descendants before emancipation was accomplished, and two or three settlements now bear his name or that of one of his English estates.

The following interesting remark of McKinnen's applies to all the windward islands now as it did a century ago. "Remote as their situation is from Providence, so much is the distance abridged by the convenience (?) of water communication, and the locomotive habits of the planters, that they talk of 'going to town'—as they often term a voyage to Providence—with the same familiarity as an inhabitant of Greenwich (!) or Hampstead of paying his daily visit to London. Indeed, with the assistance of a good trade-wind, it may be done in less than 48 hours." He continues, with sympathy and knowledge—"sed revocare gradum, hoc opus, hic labour est; and many arduous days may be required to surmount the winds and currents which oppose a return!" *

Long Island lies about 20 miles to the east of Little Exuma. It is fifty-seven miles long, and not more than four miles across at its broadest

* Edward's West Indies—McKinnen's Appendix—Vol. IV., p. 352.

part ; in some places it is scarcely a mile wide. It was settled by a number of the wealthiest Loyalists after the revolutionary war. Shortly after the peace of 1783 nearly 4000 acres were growing cotton in which a large export trade was done. This island was very early visited by vessels from New York and Bermuda for salt. In both cotton-growing and salt-raking a considerable trade is done to-day—though it is nothing to compare with its former business. Pine-apple growing is becoming a prominent industry here, and bids fair to restore to the island some of its former prosperity. There are many settlements, the chief of which is called Clarence Town. There are many tokens, all over the island, of its ancient wealth and honour ; heavy stone walls and gates, the ruins of houses—imposing even in their decay—and the remains of once fruitful gardens, are to be seen ; and at the Bight is a church, begun by the Loyalists, recently completed and now in use.

Rum Cay is a low, sandy little island about $9\frac{1}{2}$ miles long, east and west, 5 miles broad at the east end, and 2 miles at the west. There are two townships near the east end, one at Port Boyd on the North side, the other at Port Nelson (the port of entry) on the south. Near the latter settlement is an extensive salt pond, from which for many years large quantities of salt were shipped, but latterly very little has been exported. There is another pond at the west end, but little labour is bestowed upon it. The soil makes fair returns when cultivated. A large number of cocoa-nuts has recently been

planted, and there are several plantations of hemp which thrive luxuriantly. At the north-east end of the island is a cave which contains interesting Indian figures engraved in rock.

Watling's Island. This island is about 12 miles long from north to south and from 5 to 7 miles broad, its shores being slightly indented. It has no safe anchorage and is surrounded by dangerous reefs. The interior is cut up by salt water lagoons, separated from each other by small woody hills from 100 to 140 feet high. The soil was formerly considered good and afforded *lignum-vitæ* and other woods in abundance. The island was also celebrated for its breed of horses and other stock, cargoes of them being sent occasionally to Jamaica. The inhabitants are chiefly employed in agriculture, but being so far from Nassau they cannot easily find a market there, and so their best efforts are comparatively unremunerative. The island presents many features of beauty and interest, when once a landing can be effected, whether it be regarded as the true San Salvador or not. There is, at least, always the monument of the *Chicago Herald* expedition to be seen.

Crooked Island gives its name to the group which consists of Acklin's, Fortune Island, and itself. It was a place of some importance—as were most of the windward islands—in the later years of the eighteenth century. A considerable settlement was laid out at what is still called Pitt's Town, on the western shore, and it was at one time expected to become a place of some importance. Here vessels used frequently to

put in, and the Packet, on her return from Kingston to England, used to deliver a monthly mail from England and Jamaica. Large cotton plantations, owned by Loyalists gentry and worked by hosts of negroes, gave prosperity to the place. Only a ruin marks the spot to-day. There is no one living there now, but the building is evidently a relic of the days when Crooked Island was occupied by British planters, and cotton fields covered the ground which is now a mass of tangled bush. Of these old days there is evidence of another sort. At a lonely spot on the shore are two altar-shaped tombs, the inscriptions on which are still in good preservation. One, bearing date 1780, was erected to a barrister from Louisiana, who died at sea; the other was to an Englishman, bearing date 1820. The latter had been taken ill on his way home from Jamaica and landed here, where he was nursed by the wife of a planter until his death. The spot had evidently once been a burial ground for the white people, but nothing remains of it now but these two graves, all around being a wilderness of bush and sea grape. The Caves on Crooked Island are most extensive and interesting.

Acklin's Island is the largest of the group, its extreme length being some 45 miles and its greatest width about 4 miles. It, also, has seen better days, for visitors of a century ago speak of being driven in carriages over good roads amongst smiling cotton fields. But the unstable soil "gave out," the red-bug appeared, and prosperity vanished. Large quantities of cave-earth have been exported from this island, and valu-

able timber and dye woods are still a source of income. Sponging and "keeping field" occupy the inhabitants' hours of labour. Coloured folk of remarkably fine physique are found here, most of them bearing the names of the planters of Scots descent who formerly cultivated the land.

Fortune Island or Long Cay, is 9 miles in extent, varying in breadth from a mile and a quarter to barely two furlongs. Its area is 819 acres and population 499. Douglas and Albert Towns, the two settlements, are about a quarter of a mile apart, and are separated by the salt-pond, which is very productive. This island was formerly the rendezvous for the windward wreckers. With the easterly winds that prevail, vessels find a temporary anchorage on the north side, off the pond, but so close in that there is not room to swing, and they must be prepared to quit the moment a change threatens. Albert Town is a port of call for the steamers of the Atlas Company, which stop there on their way from New York to engage labourers for the purpose of discharging cargo at the South American ports. The labourers are landed again on the return voyage. Salt is exported to the United States.

As Abaco is the Dan, so *Inagua* is the Beer-sheba of the Bahamas. It is also the most southerly of the colony. Over the Caicos Bank, two days' sail away, lie the Turks Islands, and here the jurisdiction of the Jamaica Government commences. From Inagua, eighteen hours' sail with a fair wind will bring the traveller to the island of the "Black Republic."

They dwell on the threshold of the West Indies who live at Inagua ; for there exists a distinction marking a very real difference between the Bahama Islands and the West Indies proper. Froude's " English in the West Indies " does not refer to the Bahamas, and, generally, it is as a sort of offshoot from Florida, or half-way house to Cuba, that these islands are thought of and mentioned.

The only considerable settlement upon Inagua is Mathew Town, once the centre of a flourishing export trade in salt. The most conspicuous building in the place is the huge salt warehouse, solidly built of white coral rock. Over the main entrance is a quaint device in red brick. These bricks have a history. They were brought up by a professional diver from the ruins of the ill-fated city of Port Royal, submerged generations ago by an earthquake, and now lying fathoms deep under Kingston Harbour Jamaica.

At one time it was seriously thought of establishing the seat of the Bahamas Government at Inagua. That was in its palmyest days, when thousands of bushels of salt were annually exported, and the roadstead off Mathew Town was alive with American vessels taking in their briny freight. From the salt ponds, some two miles out of the town, iron rails are laid, and trucks drawn by mules used to run busily backwards and forwards, discharging their loads under the cool stone arches of the great warehouse. Now the rails are rusty and the trucks stand still. Inagua looks elsewhere for her prosperity. This

island enjoys the distinction of being the best-laid-out town in the Bahamas. The streets are wide and straight, and, for the more part, smooth. Very few of these islands can boast of *streets* at all. Inagua is almost the only place outside Nassau where carriage driving is possible, and indeed, a fact of daily and delightful accomplishment. The American consul drives a beautiful pair of horses. To sit in his light buggy and trot around the salt ponds is most enjoyable. The soft trade-wind tempers the tropical heat and keeps off the mosquitoes—those “leeches perched on wings,” for which Inagua enjoys a dreadful notoriety. I once heard an American captain say that about two things, mosquitoes and wrecks, an Inagua man is unable to speak the truth. Once outside the town a verse of Longfellow’s “Slave’s Dream” comes most appropriately to mind:—

“ And before him, like a blood-red flag,
The bright flamingoes flew ;
From morn to night he followed their flight,
O’er plains where the tamarind grew,
Till he saw the roofs of Kaffir huts,
And the ocean rose to view.”

Only one detail needs adapting to the present locality. We have no Kaffirs here. Our Africans are mostly from the West Coast.

Sailing along the coast, after sunset, with the wind off shore, a fragrant earthy smell is wafted out to the vessel. This is most noticeable after the rains or on a calm, dewy night. It is the aroma of the Inagua prairie. It is this

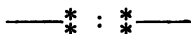
which makes Inagua unique among the Bahamas. Long Island and Crooked Island have made brave attempts to rival it in this respect, but have failed in the directions indicated by their names. Unlike these, Inagua is compact and of considerable area. Here one can stand in the centre of a huge plain of long, coarse grass, dotted by thickets of graceful palmetto trees, with troops of wild asses and occasional wild horses seen in the distance and the savannah stretching away to the horizon. This is the unique thing in this colony of long, narrow, and generally rocky islands. Such a sight—unbroken even by a glimpse of the ocean—is alike refreshing to the eyes and to one's agricultural instincts. And the horses, donkeys, and cattle give just that touch of life to the savannah which might make it, in miniature, the scene of some of Fenimore Cooper's stories—if there were any Indians !

The pair of carriage horses already referred to, are the fruit of months of patient watching and clever scheming, and of a great drought which resulted in their capture. And a piebald comrade of theirs, in the same stable, could testify to attempts made upon his liberty for over a year. Once or twice a week, someone goes out to shoot a "beef," and seldom returns empty handed, though every year the cattle are going further away from the haunts of "bloody and deceitful" men. Inevitably one contrasts the donkeys with the poor ill-used beast of the costermonger's barrow, and the result—æsthetic and actual—is entirely in favour of the untamed animals.

Several lines of steamers, running from New York to the Haitian ports, call at Inagua for labourers to discharge their cargoes. From the islands round about, men come and live in barracks in Matthew Town, waiting to be shipped for a short trip to Haiti, or to work for nine months in the mahogany forests at Bluefields. When the Panama Canal works were in progress, hundreds of Bahamians went down there in this way. Extensive plantations of sisal are under cultivation here, and hemp is being rapidly manufactured and shipped. Inagua is also a favourite port of call for the whaling ships that frequent these waters.

PART II.

THE LUCAYOS OF LONG AGO.



Where the flaming poinciana and the ever-waving palm
And the low palmetto scrub are broadly cast
O'er the sunny islands smiling still in tempest and in calm
Lives the record of a strange and storied past.

Bahamian Ballads and Rhymes.



CHAPTER XVIII.


THE LANDING OF COLUMBUS.

THE bold Genoese Joshua led forth
The Eastern Israel o'er the Western seas
Seeking the promised land of priceless worth
The Canaan of the far-off Caribbees.

• *Sonnets of the Bahamas.*

"If I do not reach the shores of Asia by sea it will be because the Atlantic has other boundaries in the west, and those boundaries I shall discover."

Columbus at the Conference of Salamanca.

T eight o'clock on the morning of Friday, the 3rd of August 1492, Christóval Colon—to give the Spanish form of his Italian name, Christoforo Colombo, which the pedantic fashion of past ages has consigned to posterity as Columbus—sailed over the bar of Saltes, off the little town of Huelva on the south-eastern coast of Spain, on his great voyage of discovery. He steered south-west for the Canaries, which he reached on the 9th, and where he stayed nearly a month seeking a vessel to replace one of his small fleet that had proved herself unseaworthy. But he could not procure another, so the *Pinta* was thoroughly overhauled and made as sound as possible. She was a *caravel* of some fifty

tons, carrying lateen sails ; the *Niña* was of the same class but smaller, while the Admiral's ship, the *Santa Maria*, was a *caravellone* of about eighty-five tons. She was the only one that was fully decked. While at Gomera the lateen sails of the *caravels* were exchanged for square sails. Wood, water and provisions were taken in here, and on the morning of the 6th of September the three ships, with their full complement of ninety men, sailed out westward into the unknown Atlantic.

It was well known amongst the foremost mariners of that period that strong evidence existed of unknown land to the westward. Martin Vincente had picked up a curiously wrought piece of wood 450 leagues to the west of Cape St. Vincent ; the husband of Columbus' wife's sister, Pedro Correa, had found a similar piece off Puerto Santo, as well as some large bamboos ; trees had drifted on shore at the Azores unlike any in Europe ; at Flores had been washed up the bodies of two men whose complexions and features were not those of Europeans, Moors, or Negroes ; and two canoes had also drifted there. The tradition of St. Brendan's voyage in the fifth century from the coast of Kerry to some western land was probably well known in the west of Europe ; as also the adventure of Biorne, the Norseman, who seems to have sailed in 986 down the Straits of Belle Isle and temporarily settled either in New Brunswick or Nova Scotia. He was followed by Lief and Thorwald, and in Sturlsen's "Heimskringla" and other sagas, not only was their prowess celebrated, but fishermen from "Limeric" were said to have been driven

westward where they found a great land whence they returned in safety. But the vaguest and most erroneous ideas were current about this land. Columbus was quite sure that it was Asia. He was deeply affected by the study of Marco Polo's travels, who was employed by Kubla Khan the Tartar, in the thirteenth century, on various missions in what we now know as the Chinese Empire, and whose descriptions of Cathay (China) and Cipango (Japan) influenced all subsequent exploration. In 1474 he entered into correspondence with the Florentine cosmographer Toscanelli, who was greatly impressed by Columbus' independent researches and his bold project ; he begged him to carry it out, assuring him that from Lisbon he would only have to sail 1350 leagues in order to arrive at the province of Mangi near Cathay. Toscanelli also sent him a chart from which Columbus made an improved one which he used on his voyage. Unfortunately neither of these is now in existence, but other sources of information furnish a fair idea of them. The coasts of Europe and Africa were shown from the south of Ireland to the end of Guinea ; opposite to them, on the other side of the Atlantic, the extremity of Asia, or, as it was called, India. Between them was placed the island of Cipango, which according to Marco Polo, lay 1500 miles from the Asiatic coast. Columbus, in his computations, advanced this island about a thousand leagues too far to the east, supposing it to occupy about the situation of Florida ; and here he hoped first to arrive. Thus it will be seen that the bold explorer was not the mad visionary that many of his contemporaries thought him. It is not so much his

errors that appear so great to-day as his sagacity and foresight, while of his courage and persistence there can be but one opinion.

Day after day they sailed out into that unknown ocean, on whose broad and trackless bosom the sailors saw, writ large, "All hope abandon ye who enter here." Only the Admiral was undaunted, even when the needle of the compass no longer pointed steadily but day by day shifted its position in a manner to them unaccountable—a horrible portent, so his men imagined, showing that Heaven itself was against their rash adventure. But Columbus ingeniously calmed their fears, and relying on his intrepid wisdom they went forward. Then they came into the region of the north-east trade wind, and made good headway. But a westerly breeze was welcome when it blew, for the Admiral says "much this contrary wind was wanted, for my people were becoming very anxious, believing that the wind in this sea was never favourable for returning to Spain."* Soon they began to discover signs of land; a heron and a tropic bird, flew by, and pieces of seaweed floated past, one larger piece with a live crab on it; then a pelican and several other birds, and a turtle; a green cane drifting west, a carved stick, and a small branch covered with dog-roses were also seen. After a false cry of "land" from the *Pinta* the crews became mutinous and Columbus had to take a determined stand against them; but gradually the feeling grew that land was close ahead, and a sharp lookout was kept from each

* Diario del Almirante.

ship. On the night of 11th October the Admiral distinctly saw a light, moving, and two others whom he called saw it also ; and at two o'clock on the following morning Rodrigo de Triana, a sailor on board the *Pinta*, sighted land about two leagues off. Immediately the ships shortened sail and lay-to until daylight, " when it was discovered that they had arrived at an island of the Lucayos, which the natives called by the name of Guanahani."

" It was on Friday morning, the 12th October, that Columbus first beheld the new world. As the day dawned he saw before him a level island, several leagues in extent, and covered with trees like a continual orchard. Though apparently uncultivated, it was populous, for the inhabitants were seen issuing from all parts of the woods and running to the shore. They were perfectly naked, and as they stood gazing at the ships, appeared by their attitudes and gestures to be lost in astonishment. Columbus made signal for the ships to cast anchor, and the boats to be manned and armed. He entered his own boat, richly attired in scarlet and holding the royal standard ; whilst Martin Alonzo Pinson, and Vicente Jañez his brother, put off in company in their boats, each with a banner of the enterprise emblazoned with a green cross, having on either side the letters F and Y, the initials of the Castilian monarchs Fernando and Ysabel, surmounted by crowns. As he approached the shore Columbus, who was disposed for all kinds of agreeable impressions, was delighted

* Diario del Almirante 12 de Octubre.

with the purity and suavity of the atmosphere, the crystal transparency of the sea, and the extraordinary beauty of the vegetation. He beheld, also, fruits of an unknown kind upon the trees which overhung the shores. On landing he threw himself on his knees, kissed the earth, and returned thanks to God with tears of joy, His example was followed by the rest, whose hearts indeed overflowed with the same feelings of gratitude. Columbus then rising, drew his sword, displayed the royal standard, and assembling round him the two captains and the rest who had landed, he took solemn possession in the name of the Castilian sovereigns, giving the island the name of San Salvador. Having complied with the requisite forms and ceremonies, he called upon all present to take the oath of obedience to him as Admiral and Viceroy, representing the persons of the sovereigns." *

As to the exact island upon which Columbus first landed there has been for many years much difference of opinion, and though careful research has narrowed the question down to two islands, unanimity has not yet been attained. *Mayaguana*, was advocated as the landfall by Varnhagen in 1864, *Samana* by Fox in 1880, *Turks Island* by Navarette in 1825, *Cat Island* by Washington Irving in 1828 and by Humboldt—who accepted Irving's conclusions—in 1836, *Watling's Island* by Munoz in 1798, by Beecher in 1856, Peschell in 1857, Major in 1871, and Rudolff Cronan in 1891. It was in 1891 also that

* Washington Irving's Life of Columbus, Bk. IV., Chap. I, p. 155-6.

American newspaper sent two representatives to erect a monument at Watling's upon the spot they believed to be the true landfall ; but as very slight research attended this manifesto it can hardly be considered of much geographical value.

The Admiral himself is the only authority we now have concerning his landing and subsequent cruise ; all other evidence is merely corroborative. It is certain that he landed upon an island which he named San Salvador, and that after cruising about and visiting four other islands, he sailed for Cuba, which had been represented to him by the natives as the land of gold. His course along the coast of Cuba is well determined, but his landfall and the islands which he afterwards visited are still subjects of controversy. Nor, as in many similar matters, is tradition of any assistance here, as the islands were depopulated within seventy years of their discovery. So far as is known Columbus' Journal now exists only in part. A copy of it was discovered by Bishop Las Casas after the Admiral's death ; this he transcribed, literally, in some parts, and condensing others. Portions of the manuscript were so blurred and mildewed that he could hardly decipher them ; and in his rendering Las Casas is not without fault, as more than one subsequent writer has discovered by being led astray through the Bishop's incorrect interpretation of nautical phrases or obsolete words. But even if the original journal of Columbus could be found it is by no means certain that it would throw much more light upon the subject. The Admiral's imagination was at least equal to his navigation, and he was so eager to

find the riches of Cathay, which he thought he had discovered, that he paused nowhere long enough to obtain an accurate knowledge of the geography of the islands he visited, consequently his descriptions are all insufficient and many misleading.

The following extracts from his diary of the 13th and 14th of October, contain Columbus' description of Guanahani. The translation is Señor Navarette's and is taken from his valuable edition of the Spanish Voyages of Discovery, (Madrid 1825) the first two volumes of which are devoted to the papers of Columbus. This is his first reference to the geography of the island: "This island is tolerably large and very level, with fine trees and plenty of water, and a very large lake in the middle of it, without mountain and all covered with verdure most pleasing to the eye." The day following he writes :

"SUNDAY, OCT. 14.—At dawn I ordered the boat of the ship and boats of the Caravels to be got ready, and went along the island, in a north-easterly direction, to see the other side, which was on the other side of the east, and also to see the villages, and soon saw two or three and their inhabitants coming to the shore calling us and praising God; some brought us water, some eatables; others, when they saw that I did not care to go on shore, plunged into the sea swimming and came, and we understood that they asked us if we had come down from heaven; and one old man got into the boat, while others in a loud voice called both men and women, saying:

"Come and see the men from heaven. Bring them food and drink." "A crowd of men and many women came, each bringing something, giving thanks to God, throwing themselves down, and lifting their hands to heaven, and entreating or beseeching us to land there : but I was afraid of a reef of rock which entirely surrounds that island, although there is within it depth enough and ample harbour for all the vessels of christendom, but the entrance is very narrow. It is true that the interior of that belt contains some rocks, but the sea is there as still as water in a well. And in order to see all this I moved this morning that I might give an account of everything to your highnesses, and also to see where a fort could be built, and found a piece of land like an island, although it was not one, with six houses on it, which in two days could be easily cut off and converted into an island : such a work, however, is not necessary in my opinion, because the people are totally unacquainted with arms, as your highnesses will see by observing the seven whom I have caused to be taken in order to carry them to Castile to be taught our language, and to return them unless your highnesses when they shall send orders may take them all to Castile, or keep them in the same island as captives, for with fifty men all can be kept in subjection and made to do whatever you desire ; and near by the said little island there are orchards of trees the most beautiful that I have ever seen, with leaves as fresh and green as those of Castile in April and May, and much water. I observed all that harbour, and afterward I returned to the ship and set sail."

It is interesting to compare this description with the islands held to have been the landfall. *Turks Island* is six miles long from North to South and three from East to West. It is quite flat and has extensive salinas which produce the salt which forms its only export. It has no reef or harbour such as Columbus describes. *Mayaguana* lies West-North-West and East-South-East. It measures twenty-four miles from East to West and ten from North to South. It has no lake, nor is there any point along its shore from which Columbus' boats could have pulled to the North-North-East, "to see the other side of the east," and return the same day. *Samana* is an uninhabited and desolate rock running ten miles East and West and a mile and a half North and South. Captain Fox of the United States Navy—whose Report to the Coast and Geodetic Survey Department contains the most elaborate discussion of the question—assumes that a large portion of the island has been washed away since 1492. But no trace of this is apparent; and even granting that it had been so the island does not in any respect answer to Columbus' description.

There remains *Cat Island* and *Watling's Island*, for each of which, as the original Guanahani, there is something to be said. The former lies North-West and South-East, and is forty-five miles long. There are two reef harbours on its southern shore, from neither of which could Columbus have gone in his boats to the North-North-East. On the eastern shore there is no reef for about thirty miles after leaving 'Columbus Point,' the South-eastern promon-

tory, near which is said to be the landfall. Near this point there is a little cay which may have been once joined to the mainland ; and about a mile and a half inland a large lake may be seen. While not mountainous Cat Island is not level, the highest hill in the Bahamas being found near the southern end. Sir Henry Blake, a former Governor of the colony, who gave much attention to this subject, holds that the modern name of Cat Island, "San Salvador," is largely responsible for the belief that it is the original Guanahani. But this name was due, as he points out, to an ecclesiastical source. "In 1802 the Bahamas Parochial Act, defining the limits of parishes, gives Cat Island as 'the Island of San Salvador commonly called Cat Island.' The parish of Watling's Island was at the same time dedicated to St. Christopher."* Down to 1795 the island was always called Cat Island : not till 1803 is it ever mentioned in any public record as San Salvador. This naming of the different parishes probably represents an ingenious attempt to divide the doubt between the two islands, insuring to each a name that would commemorate the landfall. *Watling's Island* lies North and South, thirteen miles in length and eight wide, It is so fertile that in the old days of slavery, when systematically cultivated, it was called "the Garden of the Bahamas." A large lagoon of brackish water occupies about a third of the island. It is almost entirely surrounded by a reef. On its eastern shore a rocky promontory, on which the lighthouse now stands, projects towards the reef. To the South-West of

* Nineteenth Century, Vol. 32, p. 549.

this point lies the anchorage named "Columbus Bight" from which boats, rowing North-North East and then North-West, would come to the spacious Graham's Harbour, formed by a sweep of the reef and a promontory attached to the mainland by a narrow isthmus. From the sand-dunes of the South-East coast the lake and the fertile interior of the island lie stretched before the sight.

With regard to his movements after discovering and spending three days at San Salvador, Columbus says, "I determined to wait until to-morrow evening and then to proceed to the South-West."* He says he saw so many islands he knew not which to sail for first. This is quite possible, as from the rigging of a vessel lying to the west of Watling's, Rum Cay, Conception Island, and the hills of Long Island—looking like separate cays—may be seen distinctly. He was greatly hindered in leaving San Salvador by a strong westerly current, but made the first island (probably Rum Cay)—about seven leagues from his landfall—at noon on the 15th. He does not appear to have landed here as he says, "I saw another larger (island) to the westward, and made sail, continuing on all night."† This he did in his eagerness to find gold, though he expresses his desire "not to pass any island without taking possession of it."‡ While yet at a distance from this island he named the cape he saw before him *Santa Maria de*

* Diario del Almirante, 13 de Octubre.

† Ibid, 15 Oct.

‡ Ibid.

Conception (Long Island.) Having coasted round this North-west point he sailed for an island eight leagues further west which he named *Fernandina* (Exuma); then, having spent some days in watering his ships and visiting the native hamlets, he says, "I bore up and steered all night E.S.E. sometimes E. and then S.E., and this I did to keep off the land for there was a considerable storm."* Finally, after running before the storm all night, he anchored under the lee of what he supposed to be the southeast end of *Fernandina*, but which was really Long Island, as he had been carried far to the eastward during the night. On the 19th he sailed to the South-east to discover an island the Indians called *Samoet*, which, when he reached it (in three hours) he named *Isabella* (Crooked Island.) A rock off its western point (Bird Rock) he named the *Rocky Islet*. Here he stayed, exploring and seeking gold, till midnight of October 24, when he sailed for Cuba.

I am of opinion that it cannot be said with absolute certainty which was Columbus' landfall, or what islands he subsequently visited, and in what order. The oldest charts are worthless in such an investigation, and Las Casas' abridgement of the Journal is unreliable at best. The more deeply the question is studied the more inconclusive appears the information at command; and it is impossible within the limits of a brief chapter so to state the evidence for each different theory as to enable the reader to weigh for himself. Of quite recent investigators Sir Henry

* Diario del Almirante, 17 de Octubre.

Blake is the ablest exponent of the Watling's Island theory, and the Rev. Alexander Donovan* of the Cat Island theory. But the Admiral's brief though clear description of Guanahani certainly seems to point to Watling's Island as that historic "one of the Lucayos" where he landed long ago.

* This gentleman, who is Rector of Garton, Yorkshire, England, contributed some valuable letters to the *Nassau Guardian* during 1891 and 1892 in support of the Cat Island theory ; whether his researches have ever been more permanently published I am not aware.

CHAPTER XIX.

THE CARIBS AND THEIR CONQUERORS.

GONE are the swift canoes, the fragrant groves,
The once-familiar fields -strange-mannered men
Now call the land a new mysterious name ;
Gone is my home and all my early loves,
Dress, weapons, food, all things are alien ;
The stedfast sea alone is still the same.

The Return of the Native.

COLUMBUS thus describes the Lucayans whom he first saw on Guanahani. "In order to win the friendship and affection of that people, and because I was convinced that their conversion to our holy faith would be better promoted through love than through force, I presented some of them with red caps and some strings of glass beads which they placed around their necks, and with other trifles of insignificant worth that delighted them and by which we have got a wonderful hold on their affections. They afterward came to the boats of the vessels swimming, bringing us parrots, cotton thread in balls and spears, and many other things, which they bartered for others, we gave them, as glass beads and little bells. Finally they received everything and gave whatever they had with good will. But I thought them to be a very poor people. All of them go about naked as when

they came into the world, even the women, although I saw but one very young girl, all the rest being young men, none of them being over thirty years of age ; their forms being very well proportioned, their bodies graceful and their features handsome ; their hair is as coarse as the hair of a horse's tail and cut short ; they wear their hair over their eyebrows except a little behind which they wear long, and which they never cut ; some of them paint themselves black, and they are the colour of the Canary Islanders, neither black nor white, and some paint themselves white, and some red, and some with whatever they find, and some paint their faces, and some the whole body, and some eyes only, and some their noses only. They do not carry arms and have no knowledge of them, for when I showed them the swords they took them by the edge and through ignorance cut themselves. They have no iron ; their spears consist of staffs without iron, some of them having a fish's tooth at the end and others other things. As a body they are of good size, good demeanour and well formed. I saw some with scars on their bodies, and to my signs asking what these meant they answered in this manner—the people from neighbouring islands wanted to capture them and they had defended themselves. And I did believe and do believe, that they came from the main land to take them prisoners. They must be good servants and very intelligent because I see that they repeat very quickly what I told them, and it is my conviction that they would easily become christians, for they seem not have any sect. If it please our Lord I will take six of them from here to your highnesses on my de-

parture that they may learn to speak. I have seen here no beast whatever, but parrots only." This is an extract from his Journal of 12th October. There is a pathetic note of disappointment in the phrase "but I thought them to be a very poor people;" it is all the more noticeable when it is read in the light of the delusion under which Columbus laboured, that he had arrived at an island off Cipango, whose king, according to Marco Polo, lived in a gorgeous palace and was served from vessels of gold. The enemies which the Lucayans spoke of he imagined to be the subjects of the Great Khan of Tartary whom the Venetian traveller had said were accustomed to make raids upon the islands off their coast and to enslave the inhabitants. The Admiral called the natives *Indians*, after the name by which the southern part of Asia was then known—though he says they called themselves *Ceboynas*—and thus the title spread to all the aborigines of the western hemisphere. He speaks highly of their skill as boatmen, saying: "They came to the ship in canoes made out of trunks of trees all in one piece and wonderfully built according to the locality: in some of them forty or forty-five men came; others were smaller and in some but a single man came. They paddled with a peel like that of a baker, and made wonderful speed; and if it capsizes all begin to swim and set it right again, and bail out the water with calabashes which they carry." * These calabashes are probably the hollow gourds called *cocas* which, sawn through the centre, are still used for the same purpose all over the colony.

* Diario del Almirante 13 de Octubre

The Lucayans firmly believed that Columbus and his followers had descended from Heaven in their ships, which excited great wonder among them. Herrera tells us (Vol. 3, ch. 5) that in the course of subsequent voyages when the Spaniards conversed with the cacique Nicaragua he inquired how they came down from the skies, whether flying or whether they descended on clouds. It was this belief that made them so eager to receive presents from the celestial strangers, and much cotton and many of their crude golden trinkets were exchanged for coins, hawk's bells, heads, broken crockery, and coloured caps. But Columbus soon stopped the sailors receiving cotton and gold except for the Sovereigns. The latter, indeed, was always considered the royal perquisite on each voyage of discovery, which made the Admiral all the more eager to find mines of it, so that the adventure might commend itself to his Patrons. But all he saw in the Lucayas must have come either from Hayti or Cuba, as the geological formation of these islands precludes all possibility of its ever having been found here.

Throughout his cruise Columbus was most kind and generous in his treatment of the natives, distributing presents and assuring them of his good intentions in every possible way. When standing to the westward from Sal Salvador the caravels overtook a canoe in which was a solitary Indian, who had evidently been sent to announce the arrival of the heavenly visitors, for some of the presents that had been distributed at Guanahani were found in the canoe ; it also contained a piece of cassava bread,

a calabash of water, a handful of *Eleutheria* bark, and some red pigment for personal decoration. How strangely this resembles the simple outfit of the Bahamian of to-day as he goes in his boat from one island to another ! For the red paint should be substituted a pair of "brogues" and a change of clothes tied in a bundle, while a "flake" of "Hard-a-port" tobacco takes the place of the *croton cascarella* ; the food is the same as four hundred years ago. This man was taken on board and given honey and wine, and when they anchored he was despatched ashore, hugely delighted, with all his belongings. Quite a fleet of canoes came out that night from Fernandina and all the islanders were made happy with presents. Next morning, Columbus says, "the natives very kindly showed my men where water was to be found, and assisted them in carrying the barrels, when filled, to the shore." During his stay at this island the Admiral more closely examined the native hamlets, none of which consisted of more than twelve or fifteen houses. They were built of branches, reeds, and palm leaves, in shape like a pavilion or circular tent ; they were clean and neatly kept, and generally placed under the shelter of wide-spreading trees. He noticed also that cotton seemed to be manufactured at Fernandina in a crude fashion, for some of the natives wore aprons and mantles, and their beds—which they called *hamacs*—were of cotton netting stretched between two posts. Our word "hammock" is the only known relic of the Lucayan language—a significant survival of this comfort loving people. One of the men of Fernandina "had a piece of gold in his nose, about

the size of half a dollar on which letters were observed. And I almost fell out with them"—says Columbus—"because they would not barter it; for I would have given anything for it, in order to have seen the superscription and what coin it was. But I was answered that they never dare part with it."* Much the same were his experiences at Samoet. He found the people shy, poor, but tractable, and only stayed long enough to satisfy himself that there was no quantity of gold to be found there, though he praises the island as the most beautiful he had discovered.

To sum up the first voyage of Columbus and the subsequent history of the Spaniards in these islands it may be said, first they fell upon their knees and then they fell upon the aborigines—though not immediately. The Spanish Missionary, Quevera, in his work on "Early Missions in the New World," pithily remarks, "My countrymen have always had three objects in view when taking possession of new country. Firstly, they look for gold; secondly, they scandalise the natives by their immoral conduct; and thirdly, they endeavour to convert them to their religion by tormenting them to death."

When the Admiral sailed for Cuba the "heavenly men" passed, for a time, out of the lives of the simple Lucayans. Having found larger and more fertile islands abounding in evidences of greater wealth, they speedily forgot their landfall, and the natives might have

* Diario, 17 Octubre.

been left to speculate for all time upon the origin and nature of their celestial visitors, had they not suddenly assumed a market value in the eyes of the mercenary Spaniards. It came about in the following manner. While Columbus was Governor of Hispaniola all went well. But after eight years Bobadilla succeeded him, whose only injunction to his underlings was to produce as much ore as possible—"make the most of your time"—he would say—"there is no knowing how long it may last." And this they did, with feverish haste and fiendish cruelty. As the output of gold increased so did the Spanish tyranny, and Las Casas gives some terrible descriptions of the unhappy Caribs who perished in the mines by thousands. But this cruelty came to the ears of Isabella who sent out Ovando to supersede Bobadilla in 1502, and the natives were declared free. Immediately these children of the woods and ocean "struck" and refused to work any longer in the bowels of the earth. Ovando was at his wit's end, and sent a cunning and plausible letter to the Sovereigns representing the loss to the colony which this freedom entailed, its injurious effect upon the naturally indolent Caribs, and the fact that they kept aloof from their proper religious instructors. This last consideration was well calculated to appeal to the Queen's sympathies, and in the following year the Governor was directed to enforce labour where necessary but to pay fair wages for it, and at the same time to do all in his power to win the affection of the people and to insure their regular instruction in the Christian faith. The former command so occupied Ovando that he appears to have had but small leisure to at-

tend to the latter. Indeed, more horrible cruelties were inflicted than in the worst days of Bobadilla. The natives were over-worked, insulted, beaten, starved ; and Las Casas, says " I have found many dead in the road, others gasping under the trees, and others in the pangs of death, faintly crying 'Hunger, Hunger' ! Many killed themselves in despair, and even mothers overcame the powerful instinct of nature, and destroyed the infants at their breasts to spare them a life of wretchedness." Thus the island was almost depopulated, though at its discovery it was estimated to contain upwards of 1,200,000 souls ; labour became extremely scarce and once more Ovando's work was at a standstill. It was then that he recollected the long-forgotten Lucayos.

With a fine irony Surgeon-Major Bacot describes the fate of these unfortunate islanders. "Ovando's conscience must have smitten him when he thought of the innocent but ignorant children of nature, wasting their valuable time, without a thought of the happiness of a heavenly world, and without a consciousness of the dignity of labour in the present. He represented to the Spanish Court the advantages that might arise to the souls of the Indians and the bodies the Spaniards, if the inhabitants of the Lucayos were transported to the mines and sugar-mills of Hispaniola ; and so successful was his argument, that in May 1509, Ferdinand wrote the letter which authorized the devilish deed. A fleet was speedily fitted out, and once again, after a lapse of seventeen years, the natives of the Lucayos beheld their heavenly visitors. In former days

they had been kindly treated by Columbus, and this second visit was gladly welcomed. The best feelings of the islanders were now made the means of their destruction. The endearing affection they felt for departed parents, lovers, and friends, was the cunning bait used to entrap them. The Spaniards told them, that they had come from the heaven of their ancestors, where there was no death and no separation, that their lost friends lived again, waiting only for the advent of their relations to make their bliss complete. Now was the time to rejoin them, and the Spaniards were ready to take the living to the immortal without the dreaded passing through the gates of death. Thousands were deceived, and embarked willingly. As for the remainder, when heavenly considerations were not listened to it was, of course, necessary to use different arguments with them, and the obstinate infidels were hunted down, it is said, with bloodhounds. About 40,000 souls are supposed to have been transported to Hispaniola, and from there some few to Cubagua on the Pearl Coast, where they were made to serve as divers."*

Peter Martyr gives some pathetic pictures of these exiled Lucayans. "Many of them, in the anguish of despair obstinately refused all manner of sustenance, and retiring to desert caves and unfrequented woods, silently gave up the ghost. Others repairing to the sea-coast on the northern side of Hispaniola, cast many a longing look towards that part of the ocean where they supposed their own islands to be situated,

* Bacot's Bahamas, p. 14-15.

and as the sea-breeze rises they eagerly inhale it, fondly believing it has lately visited their own happy valleys, and comes fraught with the breath of those they love, their wives and their children. With this idea they continue for hours on the coast, until nature becomes utterly exhausted; when, stretching out their arms towards the ocean, as if to take a last embrace of their distant country and relatives, they sink down and expire without a groan."*

One who had probably been used to such work in his native land, cut down a ceiba tree and secretly shaped it into a canoe. Then he provided himself with paddles, some Indian corn, and a few gourds of water, and having persuaded another man and woman to embark with him, set out with a reckless courage for his distant island home. With great skill and patience they paddled for nearly two hundred miles, narrowly escaping shipwreck several times; but when they were almost in sight of their own shores they were met by a Spanish ship which brought them back to slavery and death. Though so many thousands of Lucayans were thus deported to Hispaniola and Cuba, in less than fifty years after the advent of the Spaniards not two hundreds Indians could be found on the former island; and Sir Francis Drake states that when he touched at Hispaniola in 1585 not one native remained, while the Spaniards had profited so little by their cruelty that they were obliged to circulate pieces of leather for want of coin.

* Bacot's Bahamas, p. 16.

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The Spaniards had neither time nor inclination for the study of anthropology ; their casual notes furnish but little knowledge of the people they destroyed, and in modern times but few traces of the Lucayans have been found in the Bahamas. Skulls and bones of the natives have occasionally been discovered in caves, but rarely a whole skeleton ; stone weapons and other implements are more frequently found and are regarded with superstition by the negroes, who call them 'thunderbolts'; some years ago a canoe complete with paddles, was found in a cave on Andros ; and other signs of a crude civilization are sometimes unearthed in the interior of the larger islands or in caves that have not been disturbed. Proffessor Cory, of Boston, while at Clarence Town, Long Island, a few years ago had brought to him a curiously carved piece of *lignum-vitæ* wood. A negro had found it in a cave far back in the hills. It was cut to represent a tortoise, but with a human head; the back was hollowed out instead of being rounded, and it had evidently been shaped from one piece of wood. Other instances are on record of somewhat similar " finds " which are most probably relics of the Lucayans. But our knowledge both of them and of their manner of life is fragmentary at best. In dancing they greatly delighted and showed much grace and agility; the cool moonlight nights they devoted to this pastime ; and every solemn occasion had its dance, accompanied by historical recitatives called by their conquerors *arretoes*. They are said to have played a game of ball, in which no bat or club was used, but the ball was received and propelled by the head, foot, or elbow, with great dexterity

and force. They were of a gentle, submissive disposition—quite different from the warlike Caribs of the more southerly islands—respectful to their superiors and devoted to their relatives. They appear to have believed in a Supreme Being and in several lesser gods, but sought to propitiate demons and probably had idols which symbolised these evil powers; their chief idea of the Hereafter was re-union with their departed friends and ancestors. The authority of the *caciques* or chiefs was hereditary, and in determining the succession, it is said, the children of a *cacique's* sister were preferred on account of the greater certainty of royal blood. Royal ornaments, attendants, and several wives were outward signs of the chief's honour, whose funeral obsequies were occasions of much primitive display.

Two adult male Lucayan skulls are to be seen in the Nassau Public Library, one in a perfect state of preservation, the other stained and somewhat worn. They were taken from a cave on one of the out-islands. Prof. Brooks of John Hopkins University, some years ago made a scientific examination of these skulls, as also of another found in a cave on New Providence and belonging to the Hon. Dr. Albury, and of portions of two skeletons which Lady Blake—wife of the then Governor—had discovered during excavations in another New Providence cave. From the paper *On the Lucayan Indians* which Professor Brooks subsequently read before the National Academy of Sciences some interesting facts may be gathered concerning these people who, like the Bathuks of Newfoundland, have been so completely swept away. The

skulls are large and about equal in size to the average modern civilized white skull. They all have certain prominent characteristic which give them a pronounced individuality and show them all to belong to the same race. The following is an interesting fact. "The skulls are artificially flattened to so great an extent that the distinction between the frontal and coronal portion of the frontal bone is obliterated. The male skulls are somewhat more flattened than the female, but all have evidently been subjected to pressure." We know of a practice of head-binding amongst the Lucayans similar to the foot-binding of the Chinese ; it was held to considerably add to the appearance ; a protrusion of the chin and other peculiarities of the jaw—which Prof. Brooks noticed—he attributes to the same cause. All the skulls, even that of the female, show that their possessors must have been unusually muscular people. Columbus thus wrote of them the day after he landed. "All are youths of good size and very handsome ; they have broader heads and foreheads than I have ever seen in any race of men, and their eyes are very beautiful, not small. All, without exception, have very straight limbs, are not corpulent, and are very well formed." The results reached in this examination exactly agree with the Admiral's description ; and putting the two together we gather that the Lucayans were a well-built and athletic race, larger than the natives of Cuba, copperhued, with fine eyes, and dark, coarse hair. It is interesting to know that the Indians of the continent which they most resemble are the original inhabitants of the Florida peninsula.

CHAPTER XX.

DAYS OF ROMANCE AND ADVENTURE.

THEN Ho for the Jolly Roger,
Sea-warriors bold are we,
Chasing our prey from day to day all over the Western sea !
Then here's to the Jolly Roger
And the Lords of the Ocean free,
Fighting all night in the silver light is the gentleman-
rover's glee !

Blackbeard's Song.

NOTWITHSTANDING the sad fate that befell the Lucayans so soon after they became known to Eastern nations, such a glamour of great hopes and strange fables continued to haunt these shores for centuries as even in this prosaic age has not wholly passed away ; and men can be found to-day—men well on in the “years that bring the philosophic mind,” and whose experience of sea-faring has been extremely limited—who firmly believe in and occasionally seek, in a furtive and feverish manner, the buried hordes of Buccaneers long since dead.

But before the days of the sea-rovers came Juan Ponce de Leon who cruised about the Lucayos in search of the Fountain of Perpetual Youth. Whence or how he became possessed

of the idea that such a spring was to be found is uncertain ; but to the quick imagination of the Spanish adventurer all things were possible in the golden west, still unexplored and inviting. With three ships he sailed from Porto Rico in March 1512. On the 27th he discovered Florida, but the water there proving unsatisfactory he once more began his search among the Lucayos, his guide being an old Indian crone who said the Fountain was to be found on Bimini. At last he gave up the fruitless errand, placed a trusty friend, Juan Perez de Ortubia, in command of the expedition, and returned to Porto Rico. At last Bimini was reached, and a general bath taken in the fabled spring, but the ancient sibyl was careful to state that its extraordinary effects would not be apparent for at least twelve months ; with which saving clause the Spaniards were forced to be satisfied.

Though for long after their discovery the Lucayos were considered the property of Spain, they were almost entirely unvisited for many years after their able-bodied inhabitants had been deported. The Pope had obligingly conferred the whole of the New World upon Ferdinand of Spain, but the Rulers of Protestant England found themselves unable to acquiesce in his donation, and it was not long before British expeditions to the Spanish Main began to interfere with the prerogatives and profits of the Dons. Raleigh, Drake, and Hawkins became names well known in these localities, and in 1578 Queen Elizabeth conferred upon Sir Humphrey Gilbert all lands in these parts not already occupied by some Christian power. Finding the

Lucayos quite neglected he promptly annexed them. But no settlement was made, and they remained for many years English only in name. The enmity existing between the two nations was accentuated by the defeat of the Great Armada, and these islands became the scenes of sanguinary and exciting encounters between rival ships in which there was but little quarter and no small cruelty shown on either side. These years of free-lance warfare begat a species of nautical brigandage in which the Buccaneers, as a distinct maritime genus, first became prominent.

The Bahamas formed a happy hunting ground amongst whose shoals and reefs and intricate channels it was easy for them, in their small craft, to escape the exasperated onslaughts of Spanish cruisers ; and the difficulties of navigation in these localities, which they knew so well, were almost insurmountable by the heavily laden treasure ships that sought an outward passage from Cuba or the mainland. A Buccaneer named Esquemeling published in London in 1684 an account of their adventures in which he thus refers to the Bahamas. "Near the island of Cuba is a great number of small islands which all go together under the name of Cayos. Of these little islands the pirates make great use, as of their own proper Ports of Refuge. Here most commonly they make their meetings, and hold Councils how to assault more easily the Spaniards." It was not alone the great wealth of the Spaniards that prompted so persistent and widespread an attack upon their ships. There was an element of Crusading in these enterprises. The tyranny of the conquerors over the defence-

less Indians whose lands they had discovered, the way in which they had been reduced to slavery, the massacres, and the outrages, gave to the Buccaneers, in some sort, a position as the avengers of outraged humanity. It was considered no crime to rob the Spaniards of riches so ill-gotten, obtained at so great a sacrifice of human life ; and though, during the century that their depredations lasted, there was much brutality practised by the Buccaneers, their rivals were always regarded as the aggressors.

Wherever, in the Western Ocean, English and Spanish met during this period, there was war, robbery, and cruelty. Southey mentions the capture of the *Blessing* of Boston, a British ship, in 1683 whose crew was taken by the Spaniards, stripped and tied to mangrove bushes on a Bahama cay, and left to perish, each man being near enough to a shipmate to watch his death-agony. And the Spaniards related similar incidents of the English. The Jenkyns Ear affair excited great indignation in England at a later date. The Spaniards, it appears, had captured Captain Jenkyns' ship, and playfully tore off one of his ears. This he produced in a bottle before the House of Commons. When asked by an honourable member what he did when under torture "I recommended my soul to God and my cause to my country !" replied the intrepid mariner. There is reason, however, to believe that Captain Jenkyns during his career had frequently given Spanish prisoners cause to commend their souls to God and their grievances to their country. The Spaniards, indeed, had a counter story of an English captain who took a Spanish

grandee prisoner, first starved him, and then, when he cried for food, offered him his own nose and ears to eat. The relations of the two powers in the West Indies were, for generations, a cause of great diplomatic difficulty between London and Madrid, and appeals for redress poured in upon both governments.

But by no means all of these nautical freebooters were Englishmen. They included in their ranks men of many nations and of all conditions. One of the most eminent was a Frenchman named Monbars, a native of Languedoc, who devoted his fortune to the enterprise, fitting out a ship, and, for many years, swooping down upon every Spanish vessel he met. It was not plunder nor the mere love of adventure that animated him, but a thirst for vengeance ; and so relentless was his courage that he was known among his comrades as " the Destroyer." Lewis Scott, an Englishman, and two Welshmen, Davis and Morgan, were especially notorious for their audacity and skill ; and it must be said that the historic names of several English admirals cannot fairly be excluded from the same category.

Though the Buccaneers at first began their depredations upon quite a small scale, the taking of prizes soon increased their resources. They became organised, drew up a code of rules to which they enforced a rigid obedience, and, as Esquemeling says, held frequent councils of war. In vain the Spaniards sent out fleets to protect their commerce. Then they tried to reduce their crafty foes by a policy of masterly inactivity—stopping, for some time, the shipping of treasure.

Nothing daunted, the Buccaneers began assaults upon Spanish cities. Scott took St. Francis, and levied blackmail upon it ; Davis, in a single ship manned by only ninety men, captured Grenada with astonishing audacity ; Morgan, the Admiral of the fleet, after many successful cruises, made a descent upon Cuba attacked the wealthy city of Puerto del Principe, defeating an army of eight hundred Spaniards and thoroughly looting the place. Flushed with victory he next assaulted Porto Bello, one of the richest and most strongly fortified cities on the Isthmus. The Buccaneers met with most remarkable success ; the forts were stormed and taken and the city plundered of jewels, gold, and silver to the value of 250,000 piastres. Maracaibo then fell before their onslaught ; but only through a ruse of amasing pluck and insolence did they escape destruction. A fire-ship was sent in amongst the Spanish fleet, which, combined with a desperate attack, resulted in the escape of the Buccaneers. But the crowning feat of Morgan's notorious career was the taking of Panama, the largest and wealthiest city of the Spanish Main. It was the centre of their commerce, the emporium for the silver of Mexico and the gold of Peru, with handsome buildings, beautiful churches, and wealthy merchants. In October 1670 the attack was made, and the stately city left a heap of ruins, to the consternation of the Spaniards and the astonishment of the New World. Such were some of the exploits in which the Bahamas were used as bases of operation or convenient retreats ; and such were some of the men whose followers, later, continued their wild careers in the less pretentious profession of common pirates.

After the Peace of Ryswick in 1696 a far-reaching change came over the political situation in Europe. Its effects were seen in the West Indies by the withdrawal from the Buccaneers of the protection of France and England. But no political change could subdue the piratical spirit though most of the great leaders were dead or had retired on their hard-won riches, (Morgan had settled in Jamaica, where he was knighted and became Governor of the island) there were not lacking men who had so caught their spirit as to be able to carry on similar nefarious enterprises even without the official approval of the great powers. And the wildness, the cupidity, and the reckless hardihood of their crews was quite unextinguished, though much restricted and rendered more risky by the altered aspect of national affairs. The avenging Buccaneers, who regarded Spanish treasure as their lawful award, became ocean Ishmaelites whose hands were against all men and whom the laws of every nation struggled for years to suppress. Compelled by the Government to leave Jamaica and the other British West Indies, the pirates turned to the Bahamas, then the nominal property of certain Nobles to whom they had been granted by Charles II. These islands were even more useful to these desperadoes than they had been to the Buccaneers, whose boldness and resources had led them to seek more extensive spheres of operation. The pirates had more need of deserted islands, friendly shoals, and difficult channels from which to prey upon the commerce of any country that came within their reach ; and, for many years after the nominal colonising of the Bahamas, Nassau was the headquarters of these

sea-rovers—a veritable Cave of Adullam without any of the saving graces of that famous stronghold.

One of the earlier and more famous pirates of this period was a man named Avery. He was originally mate of a vessel sailing from Bristol for the Spanish Main. Becoming one day acquainted with the captain of a ship engaged in the same trade, he made him drunk, put him ashore, and sailed off with his vessel, the crew nothing loth. Off Madagascar he fell in with some other pirates, and sailing in consort, they captured, off the Straits of Bab-el-Mandeb, a ship belonging to the Great Mogul. The engagement was hot but the pirates won, and shared a large booty which they foolishly allowed Avery to put on board his ship. She was not only the largest but the best sailer, so he simply left his comrades in the lurch and made for New Providence. Here he wrecked his vessel, changed his name to Bridgeman, and set out for England with his share of the plunder. But he soon lost his wealth, and died a pauper in Cornwall. He is said to have been the hero of a play entitled the *The Successful Pirate*. Hornigold, Teach, Burgess, Penner, Vane, and Rackham are the names of some of the most eminent pirates. A host of others might be mentioned, most of whom came to a bad end either through the strong arm of the law, the treachery of comrades, their own licentiousness or foolhardy bravery. Hornigold, Burgess, and La Bouche were cast away ; Teach and Penner were killed in action ; Fife was murdered by his crew ; Martell was marooned ; Cocklyn, Sample, and Vane were hanged ; and Win-

ter and Brown saved their necks by becoming Roman Catholics and Spanish subjects. One, named Samuel Speed, returned to England at the Restoration and became, strangely enough chaplain to the Earl of Ossory. In that capacity he served in the naval engagement against De Ruyter in the Dutch war of 1673, and his conduct on this occasion discovered no little previous knowledge of sea fighting. But a more remarkable story is told by Walpole, of a weather-beaten ruffian who returned, after long absence from England, and found that an old pirate-shipmate named Blackburne had become Archbishop of York !

The pirate who has the greatest reputation in the Bahamas is Edward Teach, or "Black-beard"—as he was commonly called. The rise of this ruffian to notoriety is thus described. "Teach was not entrusted with any command until Captain Benjamin Hornigold gave him the command of a prize-taker in 1717. Hornigold and Teach sailed from Providence for the continent of America, and on the way captured three vessels. After cleaning upon the coast of Virginia they made a prize of a large French Guineaman bound for Martinique, and Teach, obtaining command of her, went upon a cruise. Hornigold, with two vessels, returned to Providence and surrendered to the King's clemency. Teach now began to act an independent part, he mounted his vessel with forty guns, and named her the "Queen Anne's Revenge."* After capturing a

* Lives and exploits of English Highwaymen, Pirates, and Robbers. London 1838.

vessel off St. Vincent, engaging a man-o'-war and causing her to retreat, he met another pirate named Bonner, with whom he consorted. After making several voyages they arrived off Charleston, where they took five ships in succession as they came out of the harbour. This spread consternation in the town, no vessels durst venture out, and trade was paralysed. The pirates being in want of medicines Teach sent one of his captains ashore and demanded a medicine-chest from the Governor, threatening to kill all his prisoners unless his request was granted. He then sailed to North Carolina where he surrendered and received the King's pardon. Here he married his fourteenth wife and the Governor went to the wedding. But finding the narrow ways of respectability unsuited to his lawless disposition he soon took to piracy again. One of his first prizes he brought back and shared his booty with the Governor. His audacity and success had made him such a terror to the captains and merchants of the neighbourhood that they now took determined steps to kill or capture him. Knowing that they could not obtain justice from the Governor of North Carolina they appealed to the Governor of Virginia, who accordingly sent two sloops, manned from the *Pearl* and *Lime* frigates, under the command of Lieut. Maynard, with orders to exterminate Blackbeard and his gang. On the evening of November 21st, 1717, Maynard discovered the pirates' lurking place, and next morning he began the attack. Blackbeard's first broadside did much execution, but the Lieutenant gallantly boarded him and a desperate encounter ensued. The pirate captain, sorely wounded, engaged Maynard in a hand-to-

hand fight, and just as the officer's sword broke Blackbeard fainted from loss of blood and shortly after expired. The pirates then surrendered, and Maynard returned to Virginia with Blackbeard's head hanging at his bowsprit. Of his followers who remained only two were pardoned, one of whom is said to have died a crossing sweeper in the streets of London.

The appearance and habits of this ruffian quite corresponded with his ferocious character. He wore an enormous beard, twisted into tails like a Ramlles wig ; in action he behaved like a fury, and with three brace of pistols in bolsters slung over his shoulders, and lighted matches sticking out under his hat, he looked sufficiently aggressive even for a pirate captain. Upon one occasion he exhibited to a few of his chosen followers a hell of his own manufacture, with himself in the character of devil. He collected a quantity of sulphur and combustible material in the ship's hold, and fastening down the hatches upon himself and his crew, he lit the fire, literally involving them all in fire and brimstone. Then with oaths and frantic gestures he pranced about, no more affected by the sulphur fumes than if he had been born in such an atmosphere, till his companions, nearly suffocated compelled him to release them. Upon another occasion, when sitting in his cabin, heated with liquor, he took a pistol in each hand, cocked them under the table, blew out the candles, and crossing his arms fired at those sitting on each side of him ; one of them received a wound that maimed him for life. But he was not altogether an unlettered criminal, for he kept a Journal, from which

the following brief extracts, are taken, whose tone is significant of much. "*Such a day*—Rum all out, our company somewhat sober, a damned confusion among us ; rogues a-plotting. Great talk of separation, so I looked sharp for a prize. *Such a day*—Took a prize with a great deal of liquor on board, so kept the company hot, damned hot, then all things went well again."


What became of the pirate's treasure was never known. Just before he died Blackbeard was asked where it was hidden, and if any of his wives knew. But he answered that nobody knew but he and the devil, and that the longer lived of the two might take all ! In Captain Marryat's *Frank Mildmay* there is a reference to a discovery of treasure in Nassau some forty years ago. He says, "The citadel that stands on the hill above the town of Nassau is built on the side of the fortress which contained the treasure of the famous freebooter Blackbeard. A curious circumstance occurred during my stay on this Island, and which, beyond all doubt, was connected with the adventures of these extraordinary people, known by the appellation of the buccaneers. Some workmen were digging near the foot of the hill under the fort, when they discovered some quick-silver, and on inspection a very considerable quantity was found. It had evidently been a part of the plunder of the pirates, buried in casks or skins, and these having decayed, the liquid ore naturally escaped down the hill," This brief outline of Blackbeard's character and career is in many respects typical of all the pirates and may be taken as a fair representation of the whole disreputable company.

CHAPTER XXI.

DAYS OF THE EARLY COLONISTS.

WHAT strange and changeful fortunes have been thine,
Alternate peace and bloody pirate wars,
When Spaniards, Nobles, Brigands of the brine,
In sequence set their banners on thy shores ;
And, still unwearied, Clio writes of thee
Thou emerald island set in sapphire sea.

New Providence.

IR Humphrey Gilbert's rights over the Bahamas seem to have resulted in nothing but an occasional use of the islands during his cruises in the neighbourhood. But when Virginia was first colonised in 1612 additions to the previous charter were made, by which the Bermudas and all islands within three hundred miles of the coast were granted to the gentleman adventurers. An attempted settlement of some Bahamian island was made in 1629 but it was destroyed by the Spaniards in 1641. Both the attempt and its frustration were probably repeated. It is, however, from Bermudian sources that we gain the first specific account of the founding of an Eng-

I am indebted to Archdeacon Wakefield's researches among old Bermudian and Bahamian records for many facts contained in this chapter.

lish colony in these islands. In 1649 Captain William Sayle with two Anglican clergymen and a company of Independents who were banished from Bermuda for their non-conformity, founded a colony of religious liberty, which they called "Eleutheria" on the island then known as Cigate. Captain Sayle claimed proprietary rights over the island, and this, together with the fact that he had been for a time Governor of Bermuda, led to his being called "the governor" by his followers, and to his settlement being called Governor's Harbour. But whether this early settlement was on the site of that now called by a similar name is uncertain. On two occasions Sayle took refuge from bad weather in Nassau harbour, on the latter of which, in 1667, he named the island *Providence* in gratitude for his escape. The prefix *New* was soon added to distinguish it from the island of that name off the Mosquito coast.

On the continent of America had just been founded the new colony of the Carolinas, and Sayle, while on a visit there, subsequent to his discovery, so praised the harbour and island of Providence, that six of the Lords Proprietors of the Carolinas petitioned Charles II. to grant them proprietary rights over these islands. The Merry Monarch, willing to oblige anybody with the gift of anything he did not want, granted the request; and thus the Bahamas became closely connected with Carolina, after a subsequent Governor of which colony—Sir Edmund Andros—who was related to two of the new proprietors, the largest of these islands had already been named. The successful applicants were,

The Duke of Albermarle, Lord Craven, Lord Berkeley, Lord Ashley, Sir Peter Colleton, and Sir George Carteret. The first Governor appointed by the Lords Proprietors was Mr. John Wentworth, probably one of the Strafford family. The late Lord Shaftesbury, some time ago, presented to the State Paper Office an interesting correspondence between this first Governor and his ancestor, Lord Ashley, which would no doubt afford interesting knowledge of the early days of the colony.

When Wentworth arrived in 1670 piracy was at its height ; and the office of Governor was indeed no sinecure. His course lay between the *Seylla* of submission to the sea-rovers, and the *Charybdis* of imprisonment, torture, or death, if he presumed to restrict their lawlessness. His successor, Mr. Chillingworth, (1673) began to attempt reforms on his arrival, much to the inhabitants' disgust, who speedily shipped him off to Jamaica. The next Governor, Mr. Clarke, (1677) though rather more successful in enforcing order, met with a much worse fate. The greater prosperity his efforts induced aroused the jealousy of the Spaniards, who raided New Providence and carried him off to the Havannah, where, it is said, they roasted him to death. The next of whom we have any record is Mr. Lilburn in 1684. The intervals between the governorship is quite characteristic of those days of slow-travelling intelligence and sailing-ships, and indicate also the unwillingness of gentlemen to undertake so difficult an office. Again the Spaniards attacked the settlement, and deported most of the inhabitants ; those who

escaped their cruelty hid in the caves and woods until the invaders had withdrawn. Then, in 1687, the people chose a Presbyterian minister named Bridges to be their Governor.

Several Jacobite families settled in the Bahamas during the Revolution, and in 1690 Mr. Cadwalladr Jones was appointed Governor. He seems to have been a Welshman of the worst type. He aspired to absolute power, assumed Royal prerogatives, conferred honours as he chose and pardons for capital crimes. He refused to take the oath of allegiance to William and Mary, as he held the succession to be uncertain. His creatures were raised to office, and he levied a tax for his personal benefit on the inhabitants. He held the General Assembly when he pleased, defied their laws, and when they protested he made a pirate vessel train her guns on the Council Chamber. At last his exasperated subjects locked him up, but the pirate Avery released him. Finally, information of his misconduct found its way to London and he was deposed in 1694, and Mr. Trot reigned in his stead.

During this gentleman's administration £30,000 worth of treasure was recovered from a sunken Spanish vessel by Captain Phipps, an intrepid English navigator, and founder of the House of Normandy. He was assisted by a local pilot named Adderley, who received eight tons of silver as his share. It was about this time that Fort Nassau was built and mounted with twenty-two guns as a protection against the Spaniards; the town of a hundred and sixty houses,

which gradually grew up around it, was named Nassau as a compliment to the Prince of Orange who then occupied the English throne. Mr. Nicholas Webb succeeded Mr. Trot in 1697. He, again, behaved badly, and was obliged, in self defence, to emigrate to Pennsylvania. Without the knowledge of the Lords Proprietors he sold his commission to a mulatto named Elden, a man of infamous character, who, with the help of the pirates, held office for two years. In 1701 Mr. Elias Hasket was appointed. He prosecuted and imprisoned Elden and tried to suppress piracy. But a popular reaction set in; the people espoused the cause of the pirates, their bread-winners, and rebelled against Hasket. They put him in chains and eventually shipped him off to England, sending also a petition for redress, the quaint original of which is in the British Museum. Referring to the Governor, it states, "He's like unto the devil, and with the addition of drink, oh! he is many degrees worse than Satan himself, for then his temper is awful and only equalled by his profligacy." During this period the chief trade of the colony was with the pirates, and the chief source of income was wrecks, though dye-woods and salt were exported to America.

In 1703 the inhabitants chose an accomplice of the pirates named Elias Lightwood to be their Governor. Soon afterwards a combined French and Spanish expedition surprised Nassau, and finding the fort deserted, they blew it up, spiked the guns, and sacked the town, carrying off the principal residents to the Havannah. Next year the invaders returned, took away all the inhabi-

tants, and utterly destroyed the place ; so that when the next Governor, Mr. Birch, arrived, he encamped in the woods, vainly hoping for some one to appear to whom he could read his commission ; then he sadly returned to London. He was, for many years, the last visitor to New Providence who had the slightest claim to respectability. Bruce says, " From this time the Lords Proprietors have not concerned themselves in these islands, but gave up their right in them to the Crown, having met with nothing but expense and trouble while under their direction."

When George I. ascended the throne the merchants of London and Bristol interested in the West Indies, petitioned the government to take strong measures for the suppression of the pirates who were ruining their trade ; and Captain Woodes Rodgers was sent out with an ample force. It was he—long known as a fearless sailor—who had rescued Alexander Selkirk, the original Robinson Crusoe, from his exile on Juan Fernandez. Captain Rogers, who arrived in 1718, restored order, confidence, and prosperity to the colony. Most of the pirates surrendered and received the benefit of an Act of Indemnity that had been passed. The Governor turned their energies to good account in the improvement and fortification of Nassau. Many new settlers came, several German protestant refugees among them ; these turned their attention to agriculture, introducing pine-apple growing ; and something like commerce began to be established. Captain Rogers was Governor a second time, succeeding Mr. George Phenny in 1728 ; but in 1733 Governor Fitzwilliam, by his harsh-

ness and oppression, did much harm to the colony. He was deposed, and Governor Tinker followed in 1738. Under his administration Nassau was thoroughly fortified. But he, too, soon displayed such an evil and autocratic temper that many settlers who had come from America, Bermuda, and the Leeward Islands, on finding how he was treating the people, returned and warned others from coming. The next two Governors were named Shirley, Mr. William Shirley assuming office in 1759 and Mr. Thomas Shirley in 1767. The population of the Bahamas at this time was as follows : Nassau ; White 999, Garrison 100, Slaves 964—Total 2063. Harbour Island and Eleuthera had a combined population of 230. No other islands were inhabited.

In 1775 the American Navy was established of which Esek Hopkins was commissioned Commodore. Its first cruise was to the Bahamas, in the following year, where they hoped to seize a quantity of powder stored there, of which the army was greatly in need. But Governor Brown had shipped it away before the Americans effected a landing. After retaining possession a few days, Commodore Hopkins abandoned New Providence, taking with him the Governor, and a few of the principal inhabitants, as prisoners. In 1781 Nassau capitulated to a force of five thousand Spaniards, no resistance being possible, as Colonel Maxwell, the Governor, had only a force of a hundred and fifty convalescents and a handful of militia to oppose them. They retained nominal possession of the colony until the close of the war in 1783. But after peace was concluded, though before the announcement of

it had reached Nassau, the place was gallantly and cleverly retaken by Colonel De Vaux of the South Carolina militia. At St. Augustine he fitted out an expedition at his own expense and sailed for Harbour Island. Here his force of sixty-five men was recruited by a number of the inhabitants, and he sailed for the Eastern Fort of New Providence. This was taken by assault, as also two hills commanding the largest Spanish fortress. Summoning the Governor to surrender, he emphasised his demand by a well-directed shot at Government House, and finally the Spaniards capitulated. They were greatly mortified to find how small was the force to which they had surrendered, and how badly they were equipped.

After the treaty of 1782 between the United States and Great Britain, by which the independence of the former was recognised, many who remained loyal to the mother country emigrated to the Bahamas. Ships were provided by the British government for the transfer of all who desired it. On September 25th, 1784, a number of transports and ordnance vessels arrived at Nassau with the garrison and military stores of St. Augustine, under General McArthur. In the same week there also arrived seven ships and two brigs crowded with refugees. During the early months of the following year, loyalists were continually arriving from Florida, which had been ceded to Spain; and on March 1st it was announced that the last transport would leave St. Mary's for Nassau "with all those refugees who had not yet availed themselves of His Majesty's bounty." Many must have arrived in great poverty, as ships were sent from England

with large supplies of provisions, building material, and farm implements, This immigration to the Bahamas had an invaluable effect upon the life and prospects of the colony. Land was bought up, other islands settled, new industries started, and ships as large as three hundred tons were built. Six square-rigged vessels were seen at once in Nassau harbour laden with cotton for London, and during many years the exports of this article amounted to several hundred tons. Before the immigration there were only 1750 white people in the colony and 2300 coloured ; but the influx of " royal refugees " raised the number of the former to 3500 and of the latter to 6500. The new arrivals being men of energy and resource, desired, naturally enough, some share in the government, to which their numbers fairly entitled them. They declined obedience to laws not of their own making, demanded a dissolution of the Assembly, carried all their candidates for Nassau at the following election, and generally made themselves felt. An entirely new era of Bahamian life began with their arrival.

When the Earl of Dunmore became Governor in 1786 Nassau began to assume something of its present appearance. Though his tenure of office was short, he accomplished much both for the capital and the colony at large. He built Forts Fincastle and Charlotte, and guided the new life of the place into wise and profitable channels. In 1787 we obtain a last glimpse of the Lords Proprietors, their descendants receiving each a grant of £2000 to relinquish their claim to the Bahamas, which were thereupon conveyed to the Crown.

CHAPTER XXII.

IN SLAVERY TIME.

"On Monday next, the 2nd instant,

AT THE VENDUE HOUSE

At 10 o'clock, a.m.,

Will be sold by Auction

50 BARRELS superfine Richmond Flour,
Rice in tierces and half tierces,
About 5,000 feet Y. P. Flooring Boards,
50 Bags Corn ;

Also,

A young Negro man named Richard, aged about 21
years,

A young Negro woman, a good Washer and Ironer,

A Negro Boy named Henry.

At six month's credit."

The Bahama Argus, 31 March, 1832.

THE character of Bahamian life became greatly changed during the closing years of the seventeenth century. The suppression of piracy and the settlement of all the larger islands gave a stability unknown before, to commercial and social affairs. Though several ex-pirates and many descendants of these ocean outlaws were found amongst the inhabitants, they did but serve to supply that element of hardy seamanship so necessary in an archipelago of widely-

scattered islands, amongst which navigation is always difficult and often disastrous. Many of them were wreckers, but some had become farmers. A new element had entered into Bahamian life with the advent of the refugees, Wars and rumours of wars had ceased—for a time at least; and property owners—men with a stake in the country—took the place of the sea-going nomads who had hitherto formed the bulk of the small and shifting population of the colony.

The wealthier refugees had brought with them their slaves, who represented a large proportion of their property. The former inhabitants also had their slaves, some sailing in their vessels, others working in their fields; and of the negro portion of the community it may be said that there were none free. But they appear, on the whole, to have been not badly treated—according to the accepted canons of slavery in those days. McKinnen's interesting account of his tour through the Bahamas in 1800—which forms a worthy supplement to Bryan Edwards' invaluable old book on the West Indies—from which I have quoted many times, furnishes us with a few sympathetic pictures of life here during the days of slavery. He says, "The negroes in the Bahama Islands discover, in general, more spirit and execution than in the southern parts of the West Indies. Something perhaps may be attributed to a more invigorating climate as a physical cause; but I believe more is due to the circumstances in which they are placed. Their labour is allotted to them daily and individually, according to their strength; and if they

are so diligent as to have finished it at an early hour, the rest of the day is allowed to them for amusement or their private concerns. The master also frequently superintends them himself; and therefore it rarely happens that they are so much subject to the discipline of the whip as where the gangs are large and directed by agents or overseers." *

It was during the thirty years or so when cotton-growing was the chief industry of these islands that the largest plantations of slaves were to be found, and their labour was most remunerative. Here is a good description of gathering the cotton harvest on Acklin's Island. "The cotton fields were at this time in full blow: the white down, or wood, which envelopes the seeds, just beginning to appear. This is the moment at which it is necessary to gather in the pods before their contents become dishevelled and scattered by the wind. Various species and varieties of the cotton shrub, imported from Georgia (whence the planters in the Bahamas generally emigrated), and the eastern and more southern parts of the West Indies, are cultivated promiscuously here: but that which has been brought from *Anguilla* seems more generally, I believe, in use: and is raised with the least labour. It is generally supposed, by good planters, that about five or six acres of land may be employed in the culture of the *Anguilla* cotton to each working slave or taskable hand: but in the Georgian (or, as it is properly called, Persian)

* Edwards' West Indies—McKinnen's Appendix, Vol. IV. p. 358.

cotton, not more than four. This estimate of the quantity of labour which the plantation requires, comprehends that part of it in provisions and pasture, or appropriated to the margins of the fields, which may be about one half of the whole. I amused myself in passing over the shrubberies at the time of gathering in the crop, which was performed with much more dexterity by the women than the men, although their utmost exertions were stimulated and put forth by the hope of a reward. One lusty female slave, with a child upon her back, gathered in between forty and fifty pounds for each day's work. The greatest quantity of cotton is usually found on bushes in the more elevated and exposed situations; and it has been said, that in some estates half, and even three-fourths, of a ton of clean wool has been produced to every working slave. This however, would be to calculate on very rare fortune. Most planters would feel themselves at present well satisfied with one-sixth of the greater quantity."

Concerning Nassau, at that time, this observant gentleman remarks, "It appeared to be visited often whilst I remained there by African slave-ships, some of which disposed of their cargoes on the island, but the major part proceeded to the Havannah. I was witness to the sale of a pretty numerous cargo, which was conducted with more decorum, with respect to the slaves, than I had expected. They were distributed mostly in lots from five to twenty in each; but

* Edwards' West Indies—McKinnen's Appendix, Vol. IV. p. 363.

some of the boys and girls were disposed of separately. On the neck of each slave was slung a label specifying the price which the owner demanded, and varying between two and three hundred dollars, according to age, strength, sex, etc. This cargo was composed, as generally happens, of slaves from different nations and speaking languages unintelligible to each other. Some apprehensions prevailed, notwithstanding all the expedients which had been used to convince them to the contrary, that they were brought over to be fattened and *eaten*. I had an opportunity of observing two or three the day after the sale in the hands of benevolent masters, purchased for domestic servants, who seemed much delighted with their kind treatment as well as change of situation. Instead of being naked, they were clothed (in this climate as usual) in wollens; their food was much superior to what they had ever known before; they found themselves lodged in habitations abounding in comforts, some of them, indeed, superior to their comprehensions; and in the streets they beheld many of their own colour, whose appearance, friendship, and hilarity had the most powerful influence in rendering them contented and happy in their new scene of life."

An Act of the Bahamas Legislature, passed in 1715, provided "that when any slave shall suffer death, inquiry shall be made, what treatment such slave had received from his or her owner, and if it shall appear that the owner of

* Edwards' West Indies—McKinnen's Appendix, Vol. IV p. 379.

such slave had inhumanly used him or her, and that necessity or cruel usage might have compelled such slave to run away, or to the commission of the offence for which he or she shall have suffered, the owner shall not be entitled to, or receive any allowance for such slave." But even here much discomfort and great degradation was the lot of the negroes in bondage. Many planters were kind, no doubt, but not all. And though public opinion was gradually becoming more enlightened and humane, the whole system was generally regarded from a purely commercial point of view. Slaves were prevented from growing articles necessary for subsistence; it being understood that what the planter produced to sell the slave should not cultivate, so that he might not enter into competition with his master. However, better opportunities were offered for the slave to earn his liberty in the Bahamas than in any other of the West Indian colonies. A law was passed in 1784 enacting "that the oath of negroes, mulattoes, mustees, or Indians shall not be good or valid in law against any white person, excepting in matters of debt; and then, any free negro, mulatto, mustee, or Indian Christian shall be allowed to prove his or her account, and sue for the same, in any court of these islands where the same shall be cognizable." Twelve years later—so had public opinion advanced—it was enacted that all slave-owners should endeavour to instruct their slaves in the Christian religion, and should fit them for baptism, and as soon as convenient, should cause to be baptized all such slaves as could be made sensible of a Deity and of Christian faith. But it was not till 1835, that

by William IV., cap. 33, dissenting ministers were allowed to baptize, and then only in parishes where there was no Anglican clergyman ; in 1796 there was only one clergyman in the whole colony, so that the Act exhorting the baptism of slaves was not of any widespread value.

The Bahamian colonists, at this time, were greatly irritated by those in England who were forcing on emancipation. So much uncertainty existed as to the turn affairs might take that many sold out and quitted the place. Property depreciated in value and business was seriously affected. Those who remained were desperately endeavouring to stave off impending ruin by passing Acts for ameliorating the condition of the slaves. These acts form an interesting study as showing wherein the slave-owners' consciences pricked them. In 1807 the importation of slaves was declared illegal. There were about 10,000 at this time in the Bahamas. In 1822 the Act concerning the oath of a slave not being good against a white person, was partially repealed, but only to this extent—that the oath was valid if the witness could produce a certificate showing that he or she had been baptized at least three years. Slaves were permitted to marry, with their owners' permission, in 1824, and in the same year certain Justices of the Peace were permitted to solemnize marriages ; but five shillings was the fee for a marriage in church (there were then three churches in the colony) and a pound for one elsewhere ; a baptism cost eight shillings and a funeral eight shillings. It was also in 1824 that restrictions were placed upon the corporal pun-

ishment of slaves ; the number of lashes and the conditions under which they were to be inflicted, were fixed ; and women were to some degree exempted. The wanton separation of families was forbidden by Act of the Legislature in 1830, children under fourteen years of age not being allowed to be sold apart from their parents, if these were man and wife, or reputed man and wife.

But emancipation was "in the air" both in England and the Colonies ; the agitation was long and serious ; party feeling ran high. Many felt sure it would come and would ruin them ; others, more sanguine, believed the government would never pass so disastrous a measure ; meantime the abolitionists worked strenuously. In 1832 King William IV. issued a proclamation announcing that whereas the slaves in British Colonies had been led to believe by some irresponsible persons that an emancipation act had already been passed, "We do hereby declare and make known, that the Slave Population in our said Colonies and Possessions, will forfeit all claim on our protection, if they shall fail to render entire submission to the Laws, as well as dutiful obedience to their masters." The time had not yet arrived, but it was surely coming.

The following extract from a Nassau newspaper of that period will indicate the point of view of the Colonists. Speaking to the slaves, the article continues "It ought also to be remembered that the situation of life in which Providence has placed you is not without its comforts. For when you have performed your

appointed work, you are happily delivered from all anxiety and tormenting care, and in the evening of each day can return to your humble cabins with confidence, being assured that no creditor will be found there claiming the little property of which you may be possessed. No sick wife or child will be there without the aid of medicine, and, if required, the assistance of a nurse; neither will your children meet you at your doors with looks expressive of starvation, and pierce your hearts with cries of hunger. No such scenes of misery are found in your dwellings for your bread is given and your water is sure."*

Here is another extract, putting the question in a fresh light. "The negroes are incapable of understanding what freedom is, the duties with which it is attended, the restraint which it imposes, and the labour it induces. To them freedom conveys the idea of the cessation of all restraint, the termination of every species of labour, the undisguised indulgence of every passion. It is not surprising that it should be so. Nature never intended that men in that stage of society should be free, because their emancipation from servitude leads immediately to evils, both to themselves and to society, incomparably greater than servitude itself."† Three weeks later the same newspaper reports the capture of a slaver by H. M. S. *Speedwell*, after a running fight of eleven hours. She was a Spanish schooner with two hundred and forty wretched creatures on board; she was taken into Havana and condemned. It is to be hoped the slaves found humane owners.

* *The Bahama Argus*, February 4th, 1832.

† *Ibid*, April 14, 1832.

At length the crisis came : on the 1st August 1834 Emancipation was declared. The Bahama slave owners received £128,296 as compensation, being £12 14s. 4d. per head for their chattels which had been declared men and women. This was not a large sum as compared with the amount paid in other colonies, and no doubt many considered it quite inadequate ; but it may be regarded as a proof that negro labour in the Bahamas was not considered very remunerative. The change was made without bloodshed, though not without much wordy war in the local press. Of the motives of the Abolitionist party many hard things were said, and the worst was feared from the success which at last crowned their long and strenuous agitation.

CHAPTER XXIII.

THE ISLANDS AND THE OCEAN.

I SOMETIMES dream on those adventurous days,
And see this quiet harbour full of ships,
And feel the keen excitement of each run ;
Think on rich comrades and their reckless ways,
And hear the laughter of their silent lips.

Meditations of an Ancient Mariner.

BORN on the borders of the ocean, as all Bahamians inevitably are, and living on islands whose capacity to produce profitable articles of export in large quantities has never been long continued, it is natural that the inhabitants should have turned to the sea to find, if possible, that livelihood they failed to make—or did not attempt to discover upon the land. In a previous chapter I have hinted at what appear to be the chief causes of these conditions of life. To blame men for following their natural bent, for not stultifying their inherited instincts or habits so easily acquired, is hardly justified even by the less permanent profits which have resulted from their inveterate devotion to the deep. We may lament, in these later days, the lack of intelligent and persistent agricultural endeavour which the Bahamas exhibits, but we cannot find it in our hearts to upbraid when we remember

the past history of the colony. For quite three centuries the sea has been the nursing mother and the provident father of these islanders, and, though the mother—in a sense—is old and barren, and the hoary father bankrupt, their feeling of obligation and affection has by no means diminished with the passing years. The majority of each generation hears the ocean calling, and the fields may smile and beckon them in vain. The toilers of the sea who dwell upon these shores still number many hundreds, but their occupation has been almost entirely diverted from the ancient and more lucrative channels in which it formerly was found to less romantic and uncertain enterprises.

One word whispered into a crowd of Bahamians causes to-day more attention and excitement than rumours of wars or rewards of valour. That simple but significant word is "wreck." Sick men leap from their beds at the sound, idlers become transformed with energy, sober merchants forget their commercial calm, and mariners of all sorts and ages "stiffen the sinews, summon up the blood," run for their axes and oilskins, launch their boats and put to sea with no less ardour and despatch than their sea-roving ancestors of long ago. The spirit of the olden times slumbers in the present but has never been extinguished. It is well expressed in McKinnen's record of an interesting interview which took place during his tour.

"Happening"—he says—"in the course of one of my passages through the Bahamas, to fall in with a wrecker, I held as long a conversation

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with him as his haste would permit, and was inquisitive on the subject of his occupation. I will set down the dialogue as it took place.

QUESTION. From whence come you ?

ANSWER. From Providence—last from Flamingo Bay in Exuma.

Q. Where are you bound to ?

A. On a wrecking voyage to Cuba and the westward.

Q. Are there many of you in this quarter ?

A. Morgan, I, and Fernander parted company a while ago.

Q. What success in cruising ?

A. Middling, only middling.

Q. We have seen very few wreckers to the eastward, are there many to the westward ?

A. We lay with forty sail four months along Florida shore.

Q. Forty sail ! Then certainly you must have had many opportunities of being essentially serviceable to vessels passing the Gulf Stream, by directing them to keep off from places of danger, with which you made it your business to become acquainted ?

A. Not much of that—they went on generally in the night.

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Q. But then you might have afforded them timely notice by making beacons on shore, or showing your lights?

A. No, no, (laughing) we always put them out, for a better chance by night.

Q. But would there not have been more humanity in showing them their danger?

A. I did not go there for humanity, I went wrecking. (In truth, as strong an apology as any that can be suggested for it.)" *

A large trade passes through and around these islands, vessels going north and south between the continent and the West Indies or the Gulf ports. The winds are generally strong, the currents dangerous and reefs and shoals abound. Accidents will happen to the most wary, and opportunities are not wanting for the deliberate wrecking of a vessel either by captain or pilot. Legislation failed to efficiently regulate wrecking, though men and vessels were licensed, wreck-masters appointed, and Courts authorised to decide the amount of salvage to be awarded and to punish extortion or robbery. Wrecking was a business then, seriously followed and profitable; now it gives but occasional occupation and its results are uncertain and small. Fleets used to be fitted out and sent on cruises to those parts of the colony most dangerous for passing ships, and through their timely intervention many lives were saved, no doubt, and a certain

* Edwards' West Indies—McKinnen's Appendix, Vol IV. p. 363.

amount of property recovered ; but robbery, and many nefarious practices were encouraged by the system, whose worst effects were seen in the characters and habits of the wreckers themselves.

The Bishop of the Bahamas, after his first visitation in 1864, writes thus of the Biminis, " These islands are the great ' wrecking ' rendezvous, lying as they do on the edge of the Gulf Stream, where the force of the current together with adverse winds, drives many a vessel ashore on the shoals which abound in the neighbourhood. This, and the baneful traffic which it fosters, may account for much of the debased condition of the people, but as long as the system prevails little advancement can be made either in material prosperity or morality. For not only is it a most lazy occupation, as those engaged must cruise about in idleness for months on chance of a wreck, which, if met with, does not bring them in what might have been earned by honest labour in less time, but the way in which this wrecking is carried on is most demoralising. Captains are bribed, or, as the phrase here is, their fingers are ' buttered,' to put their ships aground. Wrecked property is considered fair plunder ; and as every hand engaged on a wreck has a share of the salvage, shares are created by taking out wrecking licences in fictitious names. I am credibly informed of a case in which licences were taken out for *three unborn* children, two of which when born, turned out to be girls ! And I know of another man, of whom it is said that he used to take out wreck licences for his horse and cow. The worst

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of it is, that, as with smuggling at home, there exists a conventional morality with respect to wrecking and the people do not recognise the sin of it." *

Since that time strict Courts of Enquiry and an excellent system of Imperial Lighthouses, together with many colonial lights and beacons, have done much to prevent disasters, and to discourage deliberate wrecking. Some idea of the extent to which wrecking flourished may be gathered from the following figures taken from the Government Blue Books for their respective years. From 1858 to 1864 the number of wrecks officially reported was 313 ; but during the longer period from '55 to '64, of all the wrecks reported, only 96 came before the Vice-Admiralty court, and the aggregate amount of salvage awarded in these cases was upwards of £73,000.

The Golden Age of the Bahamas came during the war between the Northern and Southern States of America, and lasted from 1861 to 1865. This was due to its convenient situation either as a base of supplies for the Gulf ports or those on the Atlantic seaboard. Following the proclamation which recognised the Confederates as belligerents, came the Royal announcement that strict neutrality was to be observed by British subjects towards the combatants. But the law of nations held that a blockade to be real must be effective—the ports must be actually

* Life of Bishop Venables, p. 24.

and satisfactorily invested. This, in the early months, was a thing impossible of accomplishment by the Federals, as the Confederate seaboard extended from the Potomac to the Rio Grande, a distance of about three thousand miles, and the total fleet of the whole United States when the war broke out consisted of only 150 vessels, many of which were unserviceable, some were out of commission, and several of the best—lying at the Norfolk Navy Yard—were seized by the Confederates. It was during this period that many schooners, and even sloops, were able to slip over from Nassau to Southern ports carrying in provisions and bringing out a few bales of cotton. The risk was not then very great as the blockade was far from being effective.

With great energy the Federals bought and equipped vessels for their fleet, and more than fifty ironclads and gunboats were laid down and their construction hurried forward. Every few months the blockade became more real and compelled more respect ; and in proportion to its effectiveness so were efforts to evade it redoubled by the " neutrals." It was soon found that sailing ships were absolutely no use, and steamers were resorted to. At first the policy was to send vessels so old and unseaworthy that their possible seizure would be a small matter. But this was soon abandoned, and swifter and better ships were put into the work in increasing numbers, many being built expressly for the purpose. The first steel steamship that ever crossed the Atlantic was the *Banshee*, built by a Liverpool firm, for the express purpose of run-

ning the blockade; and year by year, as improvements were made in the construction of vessels, they were eagerly adopted by the blockade runners, to whom great speed, light draught, large cargo-capacity, and general seaworthiness were qualities of the first importance.

The profits of these adventurous voyages were often enormous and usually large. Everything, of course, depended on the fortune attending the attempt. If uncaptured, and the cargo safely landed, both in and out, a very good trip was made. But sometimes all was lost either by fire, shipwreck, capture or destruction by the blockaders; and, not infrequently, many weary months were spent in northern prisons by men who had hoped to be handsomely rewarded for their trouble. A pilot frequently received £700 or £800 a round trip, and sailors from £50 to £60; the salary of the captain rose from £600 to £1000 a trip, and the chief officers received about £300 each. The captain had the privilege of carrying ten, the pilots five, and the chief officers two bales of cotton each per voyage. In 1863 the expenses of a steamer which could carry 800 bales—including wages, coal, provisions, commissions etc.—were £3000 for a round trip; in the following year they rose to £5000, through higher wages and bounties, consequent upon the greater risks run. The proceeds of the *Banshee's* first trip may be taken as typical of many. She received £50 a ton as inward freight on her cargo of war material; her return cargo was tobacco and cotton; the freight for the former at £70 a ton amounted to £7000, and the profit on 500 odd bales of cotton was upwards of £50 per bale.

Nassau, during those few years of extravagant importance, was utterly different from what it had ever been before. For centuries the little town had slumbered in complete obscurity. The pirates had become wreckers and the refugees the farmers of the colony. It was the obscurest of colonial capitals with a population of some 3000 or 4000 people. Then the war broke out and gold began to pour into its astonished lap. The few Government officials and the officers of the Garrison did their work with the little haste and interest its small importance justified ; and there was no sign or knowledge of Nassau in the world outside but a dusty pigeon-hole somewhere in the Colonial Office, which was filled, and emptied, and filled again, and but little notice taken of its contents. But as soon as hostilities commenced all this was changed. The little city became the cynosure of eyes commercial, social, and martial in all parts of the world. The poor and indifferent population was reinforced by a reckless, extravagant and wealthy crowd of men from many nations and of many ranks ; the few schooners that formerly came and went among the islands and carried on the trade of the colony, were thrown far into the shade by the constantly-growing number of steam ships which came racing into or stealing out from the harbour, laden with cargoes which fetched fabulous prices ; the atmosphere of indolent acquiescence in its own obscurity was exchanged by Nassau for an air of importance and a financial intoxication which must seem like a strange, exciting dream to the survivors of those stirring days. Being only 560 miles from Charleston and 640 from Wilmington, with the

chain of cays stretching much further north, forming an additional shelter of neutral territory, it is only natural that Nassau became the principal base of supplies for the blockaded Atlantic ports as Havana was for those of the Gulf.

Many hair-breadth escapes fell to the lot of the blockade-runners ; but they were usually men of courage, energy, and resource, made venturesome by their hopes of huge profit and the knowledge of the risks they ran. A voyage was usually begun at night, during which the friendly Bahama shores were used as much as possible as shelter from prowling cruisers. The run in to Wilmington was timed so as to take place before daybreak. The blockading squadron lay off the bar, some at anchor, others slowly steaming and keeping the fleet in touch. On shore, in Fort Fisher, a sharp look-out was kept so that the runner might at once have the protection of the artillery if chased and fired at. With lights out, and the engine-room hatches covered, every man on which, and the steersman peeping at the binnacle through an aperture carried almost up to his eyes—the blockading fleet was circled round to the north, and a slow and cautious run down shore followed, feeling the way by soundings at every few yards. Suddenly a steamer is sighted ahead, and the helm altered a little ; often the runner and the cruiser passed within a hundred yards of each other, the former unseen. Then another looms up, and again an order is whispered, and unobserved, the runner creeps on. Then a cruiser steams right across her course, and the runner stops dead. So the night wears away, and the river bar draws nearer.

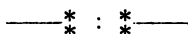
When dawn comes the gun boats nearest in angrily open fire and begin to chase, but concealment now being unnecessary, the runner goes full steam for the channel, and, if not badly hit, succeeds in getting clear. Once within the range of Fort Fisher's guns the runner was safe, for Colonel Lamb, who commanded there, was always a good friend to them—prompt in action and ready of resource. Then the journey proceeded up the river to the crowded wharves of Wilmington where every fresh arrival was eagerly awaited and enthusiastically received.

Three days were usually allowed for unloading and reloading, but, on an emergency, it could be done in twenty-four hours, working night and day. Generous and welcome hospitality was usually dispensed by the runner's officers; and men on siege-rations greatly appreciated the delicacies with which they were supplied. Though war, sickness, privations, and anxieties made life uncertain and laborious, there was much warm friendship existing in those days between the Confederates and their friends; and the excitement, extravagance, and waste prevailing in Nassau found its opposite extreme in the blockaded ports, whose assistance it was so dangerous but profitable to attempt. The extent of the trade developed in Nassau may be judged from the following list of Exports and Imports for the preceding years and those inclusive of the blockade-running period.

YEAR.	IMPORTS.	EXPORTS.
1860	£234,029	£157,350
1861	£274,584	£195,584
1862	£1,250,322	£1,007,755
1863	£4,295,316	£3,368,567
1864	£5,346,112	£4,672,398

What became of all the money is a mystery. The Government paid off a small debt ; many persons acquired a capital which put them into a position to continue business after the war ; many more squandered what they made ; while a few took their profits and retired from the colony, intending to live in the *otium cum dignitate* which they considered their efforts had earned for them. " In the war " is still a significant phrase in these islands. There comes a regretful sigh into the judicial tone of the counting-house as the words are uttered ; business was worth doing then—you are given to understand—and things went with a swing and movement now unknown. " In the war," says your coloured boatman—" Ah, boss dem was times !" and you are told of escapes, and encounters with angry Federal sailors, of the " inwardness " of many a northern prison, and the wild extravagant life of the days of liberty. It will be long before the effects of this time pass quite out of Bahamian life. Every year it is becoming more evident that the Golden Age will not return, and that hard work and keen competition, whether on land or sea, are the inevitable accompaniments of business in the Bahamas as elsewhere. Still, it is something to think of, something to remember, that for a few brief years Nassau knew what it was to be an object of great interest to an observant world.

EP I L O G U E.



IT so happens, I believe, that this is the first book on the Bahamas written by one who has lived here for a considerable period and has had opportunities for becoming fairly acquainted with the colony as a whole. We have had the chronicles of the casual visitor recorded in a few volumes of varying interest and value ; the impressions of the passing traveller in many magazine and newspaper articles ; brief mentions of these islands in works on the West Indies ; two or three books and pamphlets on the *fauna* and *flora* of the Bahamas ; more than one book on the stirring years of the blockade-running ; and two valuable monographs on the religious life of the colony. But in each the accent has been placed—if I may so speak—upon some single word of our local vocabulary ; upon climate, upon social customs, upon history, or upon religion. Also, the objection of antiquity lies against many of these efforts. We have not yet had a fairly complete production that enables us to know the colony, past and present, as a whole ; and it cannot be claimed that the present volume fully supplies the lack. This is a gleam ; what is wanted is an illumination. The Bahamian Barrie or Hardy, who shall do for the Lucayos what the one has done for Thrums and the other for the Wessex, has yet to appear.

It may be suggested that enough has already been done, that so small and unimportant a group of islands has had its full share of literary record. But I venture to think otherwise. The charm of this colony is not limited either to its climate or its conchology ; its interest is not exhausted by Columbus and the Buccaneers—though it is hardly to be hoped that this fact will appeal to any but those who know the Bahamas and look upon its life with observant and understanding eyes. I have mentioned the names of two living novelists who have made certain limited localities their own, and have found ample subjects for their genius in the lives of Scottish peasants and English farm-labourers. In these days when the geography of fiction is becoming a subject apart, when novels are published with maps to indicate the *habitat* of their characters, and when story-writers go to the ends of the earth in search of fresh material, it seems to me that a new and interesting era might begin for the Bahamas. Our insular peculiarities, our habits, our modes of thought, the homely comedy and tragedy of our obscure and isolated lives, would discover—I doubt not—to the quick and interested eye of the novelist new and arresting subjects for his pen ; while the caves, and reefs, and islets of the group, the pine woods and the palm groves, would form a natural and attractive *miseu en scène*.

But there is another point of view. Every British colony should have its history exactly and sufficiently recorded in a volume which should take rank as the standard work on that subject. This should be done not as a matter of mere literary speculation—in this case it would prob-

ably be unprofitable—nor as a vehicle for any personal views, but as a contribution to the history of colonization and to the more accurate knowledge of remote quarters of the globe. Already, through lack of making and handing down important and interesting records in the past, the undertaking of such a work for the Bahamas would be attended with considerable difficulty, and perhaps the reason is not far to seek. Ives wrote twenty years ago. "The same air that stimulates into rapid and vigorous growth the vegetable world operates as an opiate upon animal life, puts the Genius of History to sleep, and makes the Present too indolent to prepare and preserve records of the most important passing events." There should have been at least for over a century, a Bahamas Historical Society, to make and preserve records of family history and matters of social, commercial, and political importance. Such bodies—I believe—are found in most of the United States ; it is to their chronicles that we owe many surprising side-lights upon the trend of contemporary affairs, and to them the historians of the future will turn for facts that would otherwise have been forgotten. Not a few events have marked the life of this colony which are of considerable local importance, besides contributing valuable subsidiary information to the history of the outside world. None are more likely to agree with such an opinion than the older colonists now living ; is it too much to hope that the future historian of the colony will come forth from their ranks ?

* *Isles of Summer*, p. 56.

Such a work as I have imagined could only be written by one who has lived here for many years. McKinnen modestly closes his account of the Bahamas, written early in the century, with the following wise words. "It rarely happens that the information of a traveller is as exact as that of many persons resident in the countries he presumes to describe. Hasty impressions are too often received, which time and deliberate inquiry might correct; and the novelty of objects, while it prompts and animates description, is too often unfriendly to that reflection and patient discrimination which alone can render our observations useful." * With which verdict, I imagine most thoughtful persons will find themselves to be entirely in agreement.

One who is in close and sympathetic touch with the life, not only of the capital, but of the whole group of islands, who has a quick and appreciative eye for the stirring days of past adventure, for the picturesque crudities of a life fast disappearing, for interesting survivals in speech and custom, and for the slow coming changes that sweep in amongst the islands on the rising tide of modern conventionality—such an one will find in the past and present life of the Lucayos a subject of absorbing interest, intrinsically worthy of record, of a complete and picturesque setting in correct historical perspective.

Sources of information are not lacking for him who can or cares to use them. In the per-

* Edwards' West Indies—McKinnen's Appendix, Vol. IV, p. 403.

sonal reminiscences of the oldest colonists from Abaco to Inagua, and in the recollections of many who formerly lived here ; in the ancient Government Records found in the State Paper Office, London, where are documents beginning in 1670 with letters from Mr. John Wentworth, the first Governor ; in the British Museum, and in the archives of Historical Societies in Massachusetts, Virginia, and the Carolinas ; in the Libraries of the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel, the Wesleyan Missionary Society ; as well as in old volumes of newspapers and in all books previously published on the colony or related subjects, will material for such a history be found. To write it, as I venture to think such a work should be done, would require a large space of uninterrupted leisure, no small enthusiasm, and patience, in addition to a measure of insight, accuracy, sympathy and historical imagination. But it is worth doing, and the work would be its own reward. It is to be hoped that the next book on the Bahamas will at least attempt this not unworthy ideal.



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